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Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XVIII, Issue No. 61 | SATURDAY MARCH 1, 2008 | www.saipantribune.com 50¢

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Do you support the continued operation of public radio station KRNM in the CNMI?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Mall Blast

An explosion possibly caused by a gas leak ripped through a suburban Chicago shopping plaza, injuring nine people.

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Miracle Baby

A newborn girl fell through the toilet in a moving train and onto the tracks moments after her mother gave birth.

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RP Rally

Two former Philippine presidents promised to join thousands of protesters Friday.

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CHALLENGES IN WAGE IMPACT STUDY

Lack of time and data

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Department of Labor says it faced many challenges while conducting the study on the impact of recent wage hikes in the Northern Marianas and American Samoa.

Jay Berman, a senior economist at DOL's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, told a congressional hearing Thursday that the department's research was limited by the lack of timely labor market data on American Samoa and the CNMI, in addition to the relatively short time frame given to conduct the study.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held the hearing to give a chance to the CNMI and American Samoa governments, as well as concerned federal officials, to voice their opinion on the recent and future wage increases.

Berman, one of the six witnesses who testified at the hearing, noted that the federal minimum wage law only gave U.S. Labor eight months from May 25, 2007—when the law was enacted—to report on the impact of the first 50-cent increase.

He said this timeframe "did not provide sufficient time to observe actual ef-

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Miura hires 2 veteran attorneys

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Japanese businessman Kazuyoshi Miura has hired veteran lawyers Bruce Berline and Mark Hanson to represent him in the extradition case.

This developed as Attorney General Matthew Gregory and chief prosecutor Jeffery Warfield Sr. held a press conference for the visiting Japanese media and local media yesterday afternoon at the Multi-Purpose building in Susupe.

Berline

Berline announced their roles in the case after he and Mark Hanson and an interpreter emerged from the Depart-

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Miura's blog led to arrest

By RICHARD WINTON, ANDREW BLANKSTEIN AND RICH CONNELL
(C) 2008, LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES—In the end, it was his own Internet blog that helped Los Angeles detectives nab Kazuyoshi Miura.

The Japanese businessman was wanted for allegedly hiring a gunman to shoot his 28-year-old wife, Kazumi, on a downtown Los Angeles street 27 years ago. Miura, who was wounded in the attack, made it appear to be a random crime, fanning Japanese fears of a city known for its street violence.

Miura was arrested last Friday while trying to leave Saipan, a popular tourist destination in the Pacific north of Guam. He had remained in the sights of the Los Angeles Police Department as a generation of homicide investigators came and went.

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LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Japanese businessman was wanted for allegedly hiring a gunman to shoot his 28-year-old wife, Kazumi, right, on a downtown Los Angeles street 27 years ago.

YOUNG ISLAND POETS

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities Fifth Annual Sengebau Poetry Competition student contestants gather for a photo with Council board members during the awarding ceremony at the American Memorial Park Visitors Center amphitheater Thursday night.

Local

AMIM scholarship ready to get rolling

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Guam mayors say they are ready to go with the implementation of the Association of Mariana Islands Mayors scholarship program that had been introduced a decade ago and was adopted only last year during the group's 14th general assembly.

According to Yigo Mayor Robert S. Lizama, the group already has funding available for the scholarship and that Guam is ready to launch it.

The AMIM scholarship was first introduced 10 years ago by former mayor of Piti, Isabel Haggard.

"This was her resolution and she had successfully got it approved when she was still mayor. With that, we just kind of carried the torch and finalized it in our 14th assembly and now we're actually ready to do our rewarding" said Lizama.

He said that the organization met with officials of the University of Guam and the Guam Community College to discuss guidelines for the scholarship.

The Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council has yet to sit down with the Northern Marianas College to discuss the guidelines of the scholarship.

The AMIM scholarship program promises to award Saipan, Tinian, and Rota $1,000 scholarship grant each. Guam will get $2,000.

The Northern Islands, which is supposedly part of the AMIM, will not be awarded the $1,000 scholarship as it has not participated in the association for "some time," according to Lizama.

"Northern Islands mayor Jessie Taisakan has not been involved with our general assemblies. He came in 2004 only to observe. After that, he never came back," he added.

Lizama said that annual dues by the Northern Islands had also never been paid.

Annual dues of $300 per voter are collected from each AMIM member to help push through the organization's projects such as the AMIM scholarship.

"Until Taisakan comes out and starts joining the association and paying his dues, from there, that should do it," Lizama said.

He added that Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela had not shown up at the general assembly in the past three years.

"But for the time he has participated, Tudela had been instrumental in fostering the bridging of the islands," said Lizama. "We hope he joins us again very soon."

Although Tudela had been absent at the AMIM general assembly for the past three years, the Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council has been actively involved and has been paying its annual dues, enabling Saipanto get the AMIM scholarship.

The AMIM scholarship is restricted to local residents of the Mariana Islands who are U.S. citizens from Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan and the Northern Islands. The applicant must also be on his/her third or fourth year of undergraduate studies.

The recipient(s) from Rota,

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AMIM to promote local produce to US military

The 2008 Association of Mariana Islands Mayors treasurer and mayor of Yigo, Robert Lizama, said that the organization is working on adopting a resolution to provide a message to the U.S. military to concentrate on local produce in the CNMI and Guam during the buildup.

"We are requesting the military to consider selling local produce on base and in the commissary rather than to relying on U.S. import," Lizama said.

Lizama, who has been mayor of Yigo for 12 years now, said the main purpose of promoting local farming to the military buildup is to support local farmers and repair economic issues.

"There are many farmers out here in the islands—both the CNMI and Guam. It does not make any sense to import produce when most of them are homegrown," Lizama said.

He added that the organization is also looking at getting approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the livestock on Tinian.

"Tinian has a lot of cattle. So right now, we are looking on getting USDA approval for this particular livestock to be brought to Guam to be sold to the military," said Lizama.

Next month, Tinian representatives will attend a leadership meeting on Guam where they will present a position paper regarding the U.S. military buildup in the Marianas.

While there, they will discuss both advantages and disadvantages of a military buildup on Tinian. ***(Rianne Pangelinan-Brown)***

Wanted: NMI rep to PIDB

The CNMI Legislature has been urged to appoint a representative to a regional bank.

Currently, Sen. Joseph Mendiola is representing the Commonwealth's legislative branch member to the board of governors of the Pacific Islands Development Bank.

But the new legislative leaders, who were installed on Jan. 14, 2008, have the option to reappoint Mendiola or appoint a new member.

Senate President Pete P. Reyes and House Speaker Arnold I. Palacios have to jointly make the appointment.

The bank has seven member governments: Northern Marianas, Guam, Palau, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae. Each member is entitled to two members on the bank's board of governors, one representing the executive branch and the other representing the legislative branch. Those two governors then appoint someone to represent their government on the bank's bank of directors.

At present, Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Villagomez represents the CNMI's executive branch and, as mentioned earlier, Mendiola represents the legislative branch.

Rep. Justo Quitugua serves on the board of directors.

The bank's articles and bylaws require that upon any change in leadership in any member government, the bank president must notify the new leadership of its options with respect to membership on the board.

"I look forward to working closely with you as we both seek ways to grow our bank and expand our programs and services to the people and businesses in the Commonwealth," PIDP president and CEO Aren Palik told the legislative leaders. ***(Agnes E. Donato)***

Departing worker allowed to stay and find new employer

Labor Administrative Hearing Officer Jerry Cody has allowed a departing worker to change her mind, letting her stay and find a new employer.

Cody granted Marlyn M. Dela Cruz's request to transfer, but required her to reimburse her previous employer, Gezina A. Santos, $256 for the cost of the unused repatriation ticket that the employer purchased.

Cody ordered Dela Cruz, a Filipino, to register with Labor's Division of Employment Services within seven days. The worker was given 30 days to seek a new employer.

"Although Ms. Santos will be reimbursed for the ticket she already purchased, she will remain responsible for the cost of Ms. Dela Cruz's repatriation if the worker fails to find an employer in a timely manner and a new repatriation ticket is required," said the hearing officer in his administrative order.

Labor records show that on Nov. 6, 2007, Labor denied an application previously submitted by Santos to employ Dela Cruz.

Santos and Dela Cruz appealed. At the denial hearing, Dela Cruz testified that she did not want to seek a transfer. She asked for a repatriation ticket so that she could return to the Philippines within a month.

The hearing officer granted the worker's request and ordered Santos to provide the repatriation ticket.

On Feb. 11, 2008, Dela Cruz informed the hearing office that she has changed her mind and wants to stay in the CNMI to find a new employer.

On Feb. 15, 2008, Cody held a special hearing to address Dela Cruz's motion for reconsideration.

In his order, Cody said the original denial of the application was not the fault of Dela Cruz. Therefore, Cody said, Dela Cruz would have been granted 30 days to seek a new employer if she had requested that remedy.

In this case, however, the worker asked for repatriation—not transfer, he said. Cody said Dela Cruz now asks to be allowed to change her mind and look for a transfer employer.

The Seventh-day Adventist School accepts responsibility for the changed circumstances, which led to the change of the worker's position.

Cody said the school had explained that it planned to "hire" Dela Cruz as a missionary, which would have altered her immigration status and made a transfer unnecessary.

After the denial hearing, however, the school concluded it could not hire Dela Cruz as a missionary.

As a result, Cody said, Dela Cruz now requests that the repatriation ticket be canceled and that she be granted time to seek a new employer.

Cody said the testimony of the Seventh-day Adventist School Pastor and Principal Barbara Lee Maycock "establishes that this worker's change of position is not frivolous or interposed in bad faith."

The Labor director indicated that he does not oppose appellant's request to amend the order to grant her transfer relief.

"Based on the facts presented, this hearing officer finds that the motion should be granted and Dela Cruz should be allowed a limited time to find a new employer, provided that Santos is reimbursed for the ticket she purchased for the travel in early February," Cody said. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

LOCAL CONCERT

Inatuas Cultural dancers and San Isidro Saipan committee member Jonas Barcinas gather for a photo at the Garapan Central Park Thursday night after the successful concert featuring local artists in celebration of the San Isidro Fiesta celebrated on Rota in March.
JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

'Defer expenses on new NMC campus design'

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio has opposed a proposal to spend $1 million of federal funds on the design of a new campus for Northern Marianas College.

The project should be deferred until the government can afford it, Tenorio said in a written comment he had submitted to the Legislature concerning House Bill 16-32.

The bill seeks to re-appropriate $3 million of capital improvement funds to the college. Under the bill sponsored by Rep. David M. Apatang, $2 million will be used for building improvements and purchase of collateral equipment at NMC. The other $1 million will go to the design of a new college campus.

"While I wholeheartedly agree that the current campus is outdated, I would like to see this section [of the bill] deferred until a later time when the CNMI government has the financial resources to take on this project," Tenorio said.

He suggested that the CNMI government include the campus project in a new CIP master plan to be submitted to the federal government. He said this would aid in prioritizing projects and the allocation of funds to meet those needs.

The construction projects are seen to help NMC meet accreditation standards.

NMC is currently at risk of losing its accreditation. Part of the concerns raised by the accrediting commission is NMC's dilapidated facilities and outdated equipment.

The NMC building in Fina Sisu was constructed during the Naval Administration in 1959 and was used as a hospital. NMC moved to the building after the hospital relocated to Garapan in the early 1980s.

The NMC building was damaged during Typhoon Kim in 1986 and was partially renovated through funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

WASC has recommended, as a short-term solution to safety concerns, that the college repair its building. A long-term approach will be to build a new campus.

NMC projects that a new campus will cost $20 million to $30 million. An exact figure will not be determined until an architectural and engineering design has been completed.

MHS benefits from Tan Holdings donation

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Marianas High School was finally able to buy much needed supplies and upgrade its library's resources, thanks to a donation from the Tan Holdings Corp. to the Public School System in November 2007.

At least $28,800 worth of upgrade was done at the school. With the donation, MHS was able to address areas that had been abandoned or neglected.

Boxes of toilet papers are unloaded at the Marianas High School. The materials were bought using a portion of the money donated by the Tan Holdings Corp. to the Public School System. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

According to MHS vice principal Jessica Barcinas the school was not able to update its library for "quite some time."

"So we thought that would be a great place to start as the students use the library for so many purposes," said Barcinas.

Close to $16,000 was used to upgrade the library: $9,000 for new library furniture and $7,000 for new library reference books.

The schools also purchased $1,000 worth of new English books for the English department and close to $6,000 was used to repair air conditioners at the gym.

Barcinas said the air conditioning system in the gym was in dire need of repairs and it has become uncomfortable for the students who take their classes in there.

"We wanted to cool the gym a bit and we know it's so costly to replace the air conditioners so we decided to just work on them a little at a time," Barcinas said.

The school also purchased $5,000 worth of maintenance supplies such as rakes, mop heads, and brooms, along with toilet papers.

These purchases, she said, "will definitely have a huge impact for our students of today and the future."

She explained that times get really hard "and because we got this donation we wanted to make sure that we are not only supplying for now but also for the future."

She added that the donation from Tan Holdings Corp was a "very generous" one.

"We are just so grateful. We were able to get a lot of stuff that we had not been able to through other types of funding," she said.

She explained that with federal funding "its always so specific, you can't just spend it in any way. So when we do get donations like this, we try to fill in those areas that had been abandoned or put to the side."

"This is just something so great and we are very grateful. We don't even know what else to say," Barcinas said.

Pregnant woman hurt in 4-vehicular smashup

A pregnant woman was hurt during a four-vehicular accident along a road in Dandan yesterday morning.

The woman appeared to be fine when medics arrived and brought her inside an ambulance.

Saipan Tribune learned that a Hyundai Veracruz van slammed into the rear of a Toyota van that had stopped along with other vehicles at the intersection near the Movie Station at about 8:30am.

The strong impact caused a domino effect. The Toyota van hit the rear of the RAM 1500 pickup truck, which also struck the rear of another car.

The Hyundai and the Toyota vans had severe damage. The two other vehicles had moderate damage.

The pregnant woman was the driver of the Toyota van.

The accident snarled traffic at the intersection of Shell Station.

Traffic officers Glenn Rabago and Wally Villagomez conducted an investigation. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Police officers Glenn Rabago and Wally Villagomez investigate the smash up involving four vehicles in Dandan yesterday morning. FERDIE DE LA TORRE

AMIM

From Page 2

Tinian, and Saipan will each receive $1,000 per academic year while the successful applicant from Guam will receive $2,000 per academic year.

The use of the scholarship is strictly for tuition, related fees or books only.

A recipient must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale and be on full-time status in college.

As part of the application process, applicants are required to obtain at least one letter of recommendation from the village mayor where the applicant resides.

Applicants from the CNMI, however, must obtain a letter of recommendation from the respective municipal council members of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Extracurricular activities directly related to AMIM's priority studies will be weighed in the decision by the selection/review committee.

BLOG

From Page 1

The 60-year-old suspect spent 13 years in Japanese prison after being convicted in that country of attempted murder for an earlier attack on his wife in a Little Tokyo hotel in Los Angeles. He was also convicted in Japan for the murder of his wife, but the case was overturned on appeal.

Miura, who was charged here with murder two decades ago, had remained out of the reach of Los Angeles police and prosecutors until the persistence of retired police Lt. Jimmy Sakoda and other detectives finally paid off, officials told the *Los Angeles Times*.

For the last two years, police had been monitoring a blog written by Miura, who had become a crime sensation in Japan because of saturation media coverage of his case. In recent blog postings, he spoke of his international travel plans, including a possible trip to Saipan.

Sakoda, who worked with Japanese authorities in their prosecution of Miura, had maintained contact with his international counterparts and immigration officials in Saipan, according to Detective Rick Jackson of the LAPD's Cold Case Homicide Unit.

When Jackson received a call last year from Sakoda about the blog postings, detectives alerted Immigration and Customs officials in Guam and Saipan, both U.S. territories, to be on the lookout for Miura.

On Friday, immigration agents caught Miura as he was preparing to leave the island for Japan. The arrest culminated a case that has spanned three decades and has become one of the most sensational crimes in Japanese history.

"It was just a matter of wait and see," Jackson said of the final push to catch Miura. "If he left (Japan), and whether things would work out with our liaisons in other countries."

Miura, who has repeatedly denied involvement in his wife's murder, is awaiting extradition to Los Angeles.

Officials said that, based on recent court decisions, prosecuting Miura again in Los Angeles in his wife's murder does not violate the ban against legal double jeopardy.

Jackson, who assisted Japanese officials in their case in the late 1980s, said investigators have a solid circumstantial case against Miura, in part because of evidence developed in the Japanese prosecutions.

"We strongly believe in the case and the evidence against Mr. Miura," he said.

MIURA

From Page 1

ment of Corrections where they met the 60-year-old Miura.

"Mr. Miura has retained us in the extradition case," Berline told the thick crowd of journalists that had waited for them to exit the detention facility.

The lawyer said they will not comment further at this time.

When asked by reporters about Miura's condition in the DOC, the lawyer replied: "He is doing well."

Berline worked as a CNMI government prosecutor before going into private practice. He participated in the very complex Larry Hillblom probate and previously served as defense counsel for many Japanese nationals, including Iida Nobuko in a drug trafficking case.

Hanson did not comment. He is known for representing alien workers in labor cases.

At the press conference, Warfield explained what happened during the past two hearings at the Superior Court and the extradition process.

Warfield said the Office of the Attorney General has been in contact with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, which is sending original documents to support the complaint for extradition.

These documents, Warfield said, will include the original arrest warrant, a complaint for extradition, and affidavits in support of each.

When California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger issues a warrant for Miura's extradition from Saipan to California, CNMI Gov. Benigno R. Fitial will have to review it first for legal sufficiency, he said.

"If it is legally sufficient, the CNMI Governor will issue a Governor's warrant ordering Mr. Miura to be extradited to California," the chief prosecutor said.

Warfield said Miura may then agree to be extradited or he may contest Fitial's warrant of extradition in court.

"As of this time, we have no specific date for the arrival of the California governor's warrant or the arrival of any representatives from the Los Angles Police Department, who will escort Mr. Miura back to Los Angeles," he added.

When asked about the arrival date of LAPD detectives, Gregory said they have been communicating with them through e-mails.

"I don't think they have the warrant signed yet by the governor. So we're waiting for that," Gregory said.

Also present at the press briefing were Immigration Capt. Edward Cabrera, assistant attorney general Kevin Lynch, and press secretary Charles Reyes Jr.

Local authorities arrested Miura Feb. 22 at the Saipan international airport for the murder of his wife in Los Angeles 27 years ago. The Superior Court set no bail for his temporary liberty.

Miura had already been convicted in Japan in 1994 of the murder of his wife, Kazumi Miura. The verdict, however, was overturned by Japan's high court 10 years ago.

In filing the murder and conspiracy to commit murder charges in LA court in 1988, the LA Police Department said Miura hatched the plot to kill Kazumi to collect on life insurance policies.

LACK

From Page 1

fects of the minimum wage increases."

The initial increases of 50 cents went into effect on July 24, 2007, in American Samoa and July 25, 2007, in the Commonwealth. The specified delivery date for the report was Jan. 25, 2008.

"The period following the initial increase was too short for significant observable effects to materials," Berman said. "Adjustments of employment arrangements and of patterns of living standards typically do not occur instantaneously following a change in a key economic parameter. Also, immediate changes may be too small in scale to observe, and it may require the passage of many months before cumulative effects become large enough to observe."

Berman added that the lack of available data significantly impaired the department's efforts to measure or to project the impacts of scheduled increases.

There is no monthly or quarterly data describing labor market conditions in the CNMI and American Samoa. Both jurisdictions are not included in the U.S. Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey or in the monthly current population survey.

Furthermore, it was not feasible to conduct field investigations due to the islands' distance from the U.S. mainland. Berman said that if the department had more time, it could have sent a research team to the islands to conduct a field study. But for this to work, the teams would have had to observe employers and households over many successive months.

"Given the short reporting timeframe, design and implementation of field surveys were not practical," Berman said.

Nevertheless, he said, the department tried to compile and examine what data and information was available. The researchers also conducted extensive interviews and reviewed academic research literature regarding the economic impact of minimum wage regulations in the United States.

The U.S. Labor report had determined that future wage increases would have damaging effects on the economies of American Samoa and the Northern Marianas.

American Memorial Park seawall to be replaced

The National Park Service is planning to replace the existing sheet pile wall along the west side of the man-made causeway separating the Smiling Cove Marina entrance channel and Outer Cove Marina at the American Memorial Park in Garapan.

The causeway and breakwaters were initially built by the military during World War II. Several recent tropical storms in August and October 2006 caused damage to park facilities. The causeway along the Smiling Cove Marina entrance channel sustained significant erosion and undermining along the peninsula.

The causeway is approximately 1,800 feet long and 80 feet wide dividing the Smiling Cove boat channel from Outer Cove Marina and Harbor to the west. The southwest embankment of the causeway is hardened with a meshed concrete mattress from the southern end approximately 1,200 feet to the north. At the end of the mattress, a steel interlocking sheet pile wall begins and runs for approximately 840 feet to the northern tip of the causeway. The sheet pile wall, constructed over 40 years ago, is badly corroded and failing, causing safety concerns.

Under the proposed action, a new sheet pile wall would be constructed to replace the existing sheet pile wall. The project would also involve replacing approximately 70 linear feet of the concrete woven mattress just south of the end of the sheet wall with a riprap rock slope. This area has been undermined and the concrete mattress has failed.

The new sheet wall would begin at this rock slope. The wall would run north for approximately 800 feet to the end of the causeway. It would turn at a right angle into the causeway and rock slope at the south end to anchor the wall to the land. The wall would also turn at a right angle to the east at the north end of the peninsula for 54 feet and turn at a right angle again to the south on the east side of the peninsula for 82 feet and end in a riprap rock slope that ties into the existing rip rap slope. The wall would rise approximately 5 feet above mean sea level. The new wall would be constructed parallel to and within one foot of the west side of the existing sheet pile wall.

The NPS' preferred alternative would include backfill and grading below the mean higher high water (approximately 2.0 feet above sea level). The ground surface would be graded to the top of the sheet pile wall and be capped with a 5-foot wide walkway abutting the sheet wall. A handrail would top the sheet pile wall. Infiltration chambers would be placed within the project area to capture storm water runoff from the land surface. Contractor staging areas would be limited to existing road and previously disturbed areas adjacent to the project area.

The NPS is preparing an environmental assessment to analyze the proposed action and other alternatives and their potential impacts on the environment.

The environmental assessment will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1508.9); National Park Service Director's Order – 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making; the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended), the Endangered Species Act (1973), as amended, and the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

NPS is inviting the public's participation in the NEPA process and is soliciting comments about the proposal and any potential environmental issues that concern the community.

Provide comments or information directly to Ron Shields, NPS, 303-969-2164 or Ron_Shields@nps.gov within 30 days. Comment letters will also be accepted at the American Memorial Park Visitor Center or they may be mailed to: Superintendent, American Memorial Park, P.O. Box 5198 CHRB, Garapan, Saipan, MP 96950, Attn: Seawall Repair

The American Memorial Park consists of approximately 133 acres of landscaped areas containing memorials, wooden picnic areas, beach front; mangrove swamp and wetlands; and a causeway and breakwaters creating two boat harbors with marina facilities. ***(NPS)***

Notice of Zoning Board Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Zoning Board has been changed to Thursday, March 13, 2008 at 6:00 pm. in the 2nd floor Conference Room of the Department of Public Lands, Joeten Building, DanDan. The public is invited to attend. The agenda will include:

A. Preliminary Matters: Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes, Communications
B. Reports: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Administrator, Committees, Legal Counsel
C. Contested Cases
D. Old Business
1. Discussion about Establishment of Adult Business Overlay Zoning Districts

E. New Business
F. Public Comment
G. Executive (Closed) Session - Consult with Legal Counsel regarding pending or anticipated legal matters
H. Miscellaneous: Other Matters, Announcements, Next Meeting, Adjourn

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the Board meeting, or if you require assistance, please contact Steve Tilley, Zoning Administrator at 234-9663. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & 10 CMC 3511, et seq.).

/s/ Henry S. Hofschneider, Chair.

Live-fire training at FDM next week

The Emergency Management Office, in conjunction with U.S. Naval Forces Marianas Guam, issued an alert yesterday that the U.S. military would be conducting live-fire training on the island of Farallon De Mendenilla next week.

The first training will be held on March 3 – 4, from 9am to 8pm, while the second one will be on March 7, also from 9am to 8pm.

The general location of this activity will be on the island of Farallon De Mendenilla Training Area on a 10 nautical mile radius on all quadrants.

Due to the danger imposed by this activity, EMO is advising the public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators, to stay away from this area during the time and dates indicated.

For more information, contact the EMO Operations Section at telephone numbers 322-9528 and 322-9529, VHF MARINE CHNL 16, and HF Single Side Band Radio on 5.205.0.

Meanwhile, EMO cancelled yesterday the haze and sulfur advisory it issued Thursday.

EMO said that easterly wind flow patterns are blowing the gases out to the sea and away from the islands. Based on the local wind observation the wind has shifted to the east.

Based on the SO2 analyzer reading at the EMO, it indicated 54ppb (parts per billions) as of 8am yesterday morning. ***(EMO)***

Apply for 2008 value-added producer grants

HILO, Hawaii—Grants are now available to assist producers who want to add value to the commodities they produce on their farm. The deadline for applying for the 2008 Value-Added Producer Grant Program is March 31.

"The grants can be used for planning that establishes a viable value-added marketing opportunity, or for working capital to operate a value-added business," said USDA Rural Development State Director Lorraine P. Shin. "These grants provide farmers with the investment funds needed to expand their role in developing and marketing value-added products in domestic and international markets."

Since 2001, a total of 12 businesses in Hawaii have been awarded more than $1 million in grant funds through this program. This year $18 million is available through this nationally competitive program.

"The Value-Added Producer Grant program creates jobs and improves the financial returns for producers and farm families across rural Hawaii," says Shin. "I hope producers with interest in starting or expanding their value-added business will give us a call."

Grants are available to independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmer or rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures. Grants are available for planning or working capital purposes,.

Planning grants can be used for feasibility studies, marketing and/or business plans. Grant funds can be used to pay consultants who guide producers through the development processes. The planning activities must be related to the marketing of a value-added product.

Working capital grants can be used by new or existing businesses to pay the operating expenses of new ventures just starting out.

Further information about Value-Added Producer Grants and other Rural Development programs is available by calling the agency at 808-933-8313, at a local Rural Development office or at www.rurdev.usda.gov. A copy of the 2008 Value Added Producer Grant Notice of Solicitation of Application is available at www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm. ***(USDA)***

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XVIII, Issue No. 61

Published daily at 2/F CIC Centre,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Lynn A. Knight PUBLISHER
Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
Mark Rabago ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER
The Associated Press
Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Bad beef

Not since Upton Sinclair's 1906 book "The Jungle" has the American meat market been this shaken. On Jan. 30, the Humane Society of the United States released undercover video showing employees at a Westland/Hallmark Meat Co. plant abusing and forcing into the slaughterhouse animals that could not stand. The actions contained in this footage constitute a violation of federal animal cruelty laws as well as food safety legislation. Animals that can't stand—so-called "downer" animals—cannot be used for human consumption without the approval of an Agriculture Department inspector; the inability to stand can be a symptom of mad-cow disease, and it can also lead to wallowing in pathogen-containing feces.

As a result, the plant voluntarily recalled 143 million pounds of beef, including 50.3 million pounds that had been sent to federal nutrition programs, including those that serve schools. The risk presented by this meat is quite low—and thankfully so, since most of it has already been consumed. Still, the case raises broader questions about the structure of U.S. food inspections.

Clearly, Westland employees violated the law. The culpability of USDA inspectors in this matter is still unclear. In addition to their regular checks upon animals' arrival at the plant and their post-slaughter inspections, inspectors are supposed to make random visits to pens to verify safe and humane handling. If the abuse and slaughter of unapproved downer animals were as common as the Humane Society says they were, inspectors should have noticed. The USDA says it is investigating.

The actions of these individual inspectors aside, several problems are endemic to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. One is understaffing, as about 10 percent of inspector positions are vacant (the full-time presence of an inspector is a requirement for every meat plant). Another problem is how inspectors are deployed, since the inspection process is still largely based on a 1907 law that emphasizes quick, postmortem visual checks of beef, even though the greatest risks lie in pathogens invisible to the naked eye. The USDA could benefit from more flexibility in how it uses its resources. Having the authority to issue mandatory recalls and create more standards for pathogen levels also would help. One legislative proposal would combine the 15 federal agencies responsible for regulating different parts of the food supply into a unified Food Safety Administration. For reasons of efficiency and consistency, it's an attractive idea, but more research needs to be done to ensure that such a restructuring wouldn't create another bureaucratic mess (the Department of Homeland Security comes to mind).

More immediately, the USDA needs to better notify consumers about potential health risks. The agency's policy is to not disclose the list of retail stores known to have sold the recalled meat or products that contain it. This has led to great confusion among consumers over whether anything they've purchased or eaten was affected. The USDA should change this policy and answer that age-old question: Where's the beef?

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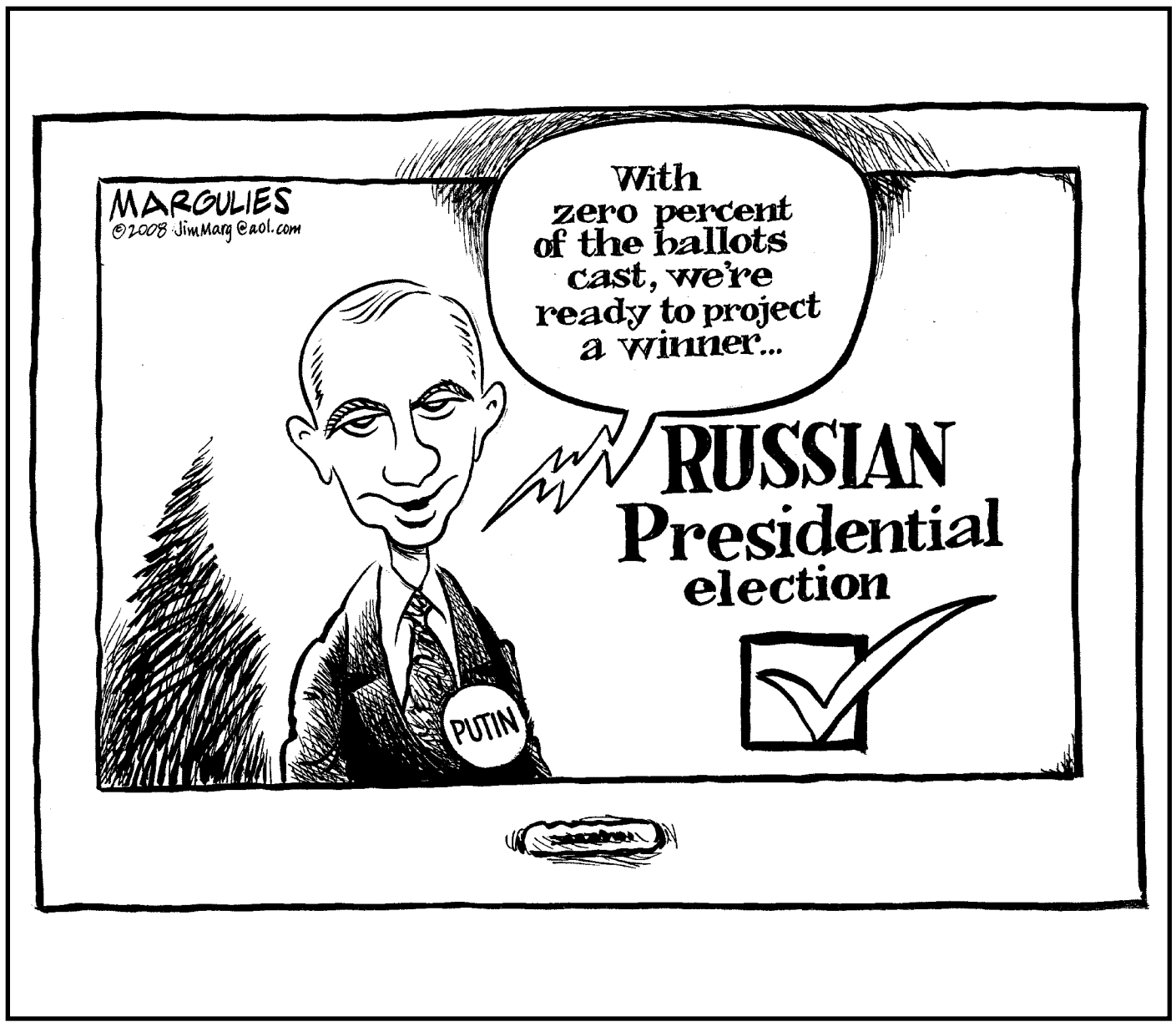


Don't play politics with poverty

By DOUGLAS MACKINNON
SPECIAL TO THE BALTIMORE SUN

Homelessness and poverty are among the most misunderstood, patronized and politically expedient issues out there. Both political parties think nothing of using the destitute as a tool to score debating points against the other. Pundits—liberal and conservative—tee up the poor or the homeless to illustrate a point that strengthens their partisan argument.

As one who grew up on welfare and was often homeless as a child, I admit to being protective of a class of people that is shunned by all but a rare few in society.

John Edwards, in his quest for "economic justice" for the poor of America, began and ended his presidential campaign in the crippled 9th Ward of New Orleans. To me, a conservative, Edwards has never seemed particularly sincere. However, as someone who was humbled by abject poverty, I appreciate the fact that, whatever his motivation, he has brought much-needed attention to an issue that begs for a constant media spotlight. It is gratifying, too, that upon his exit from the presidential campaign, Edwards said that Sen. Hillary Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama "have both pledged to me and, more importantly, through me to America, that they will make ending poverty central to their campaign for the presidency."

However, neither the Democrat nor the Republican nominee is ever going to make "ending poverty" central to his or her campaign—because it's impossible. Poverty will always be with us. The poor don't need spin. They need someone to walk a mile in their shoes and protect them from disingenuous politicians and ivory-tower academics trying to socially engineer lives they couldn't possibly understand.

More important, they need a place at the table at the next congressional hearing. They need to be able to tell their stories without the filter of ignorance. No "experts." No "advocates." Just stark reality.

During the course of his campaign, Edwards often said, "Tonight, across this country, 200,000 men and women who wore our uniform will go to sleep under bridges and on grates." That statement elicited a rebuttal from Bill O'Reilly, of the Fox News Channel, that I found particularly offensive.

O'Reilly said: "Here's the truth about poverty in America, Mr. Edwards. If you earn less than $10,000, you are poor. If a family of four earns less than $21,000, they are poor. Yet according to the government census, poor households in America have lots of stuff. Ninety-seven percent have a color TV, 78 percent a DVD player, 80 percent an air conditioner, 73 percent a car or truck, 63 percent cable or satellite TV, and 43 percent of poor households in the U.S.A. own the home they are living in."

I've been on O'Reilly's show a couple times and have a great deal of respect for him. As much as the left and many in the media may deny it, O'Reilly does try to be an honest broker on his program. That said, his "welfare queen" attack on the poor is as misleading as it is hurtful.

In the same "talking points" memo in which he goes after Edwards, O'Reilly says: "I am living proof that you can start with very little and prosper economically if you work hard and keep it honest."

Perhaps O'Reilly did not grow up in luxury. But does he have any idea what crushing poverty is really like? Does O'Reilly know what it's like to continually have your phone, your electricity, and your gas shut off for nonpayment? Does he know what it's like to be continually evicted from your apartment? Does he know what it's like to go without heat for days or weeks in the dead of winter?

I doubt he really does. I know most politicians don't.

Since I was a child, I have always bristled at those who would use "but they have a color TV" as an argument against the poor. It's lazy, intellectually dishonest, and shows a complete lack of empathy. Sometimes, those now amazingly inexpensive TVs or DVD players are the only mental escape the poor have. Beyond the front door, they often face crime, lawlessness, gang and drug warfare, and a horrific life that only those who live it can imagine.

And since when did having air conditioning to cool your children and a car to get you to your job denote wealth?

I think O'Reilly has a good heart, and he clearly has tremendous power and outreach. Instead of taking a cheap shot, maybe he will offer to dedicate at least two entire programs per year to the plight of the homeless. He will then discover that not all are alcoholics, drug addicts or mentally impaired. Many are just children and adults who have lost their way.

As for both political parties, wake me from my fainting spell if, come 2010, either of them has done anything more for the poor than to exploit them.

Times are getting tougher. The homeless are increasing in number, and apart from election-year rhetoric, most pundits and politicians continue to ignore their struggle. Shame on them, and on us.

MacKinnon, a former White House and Pentagon official, is the author of the forthcoming novel The Apocalypse Directive.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

First do no harm

Editor's Note: The following is the text of Gov. Benigno R. Fitial's oral remarks before the U.S. Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee hearing on the CNMI and American Samoa minimum wage increases, held in Washington D.C. on February 28, 2008,

By BENIGNO R. FITIAL
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Benigno R. Fitial is the governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

When I ran for Governor in 2005, I ran with one mission in mind: to revive the CNMI's economy and bring back prosperity to the people of our islands.

However, when I came into office as Governor in January of 2006, I found myself facing the greatest challenges ever encountered by a CNMI Governor.

These challenges included a power crisis with rolling blackouts and an insolvent Commonwealth Utilities Corporation dependent on direct financial subsidies from the CNMI's central government—a government that could not afford to pay for such subsidies. Our power crisis was further compounded by rising fuel prices and diminishing government revenues.

Along with the power crisis brought on by rising fuel costs and years of mismanagement, I also had to deal with a government that was practically broke and spending beyond its means, in a slumping economy producing significantly fewer revenues for our government operations.

Weakness in two major industries

In the two years and two months since I became Governor, the CNMI government has collected fewer revenues because of pronounced weakness in our tourism industry and because of the collapse of our apparel manufacturing industry. In 2005, the year before I was inaugurated Governor of the CNMI, two events occurred that devastated the CNMI economy and the livelihood of our island residents.

In January of 2005, the World Trade Organization implemented new trading rules that liberalized trade and removed trade quotas for garment exports into the United States. This development eliminated the CNMI apparel industry's competitive advantage and marked the demise of our manufacturing base, once a billion dollar industry for our islands. Since 2005, some 22 CNMI factories have closed shop, substantially reducing our tax base, along with jobs, business activities, and consumer spending throughout our local economy.

And in October of 2005, the CNMI saw the end of an era, when Japan Airlines withdrew flight service from the CNMI tourism market after providing more than 20 years of service. With the emergence of China and India, along with Japan's structural problems and its decade long recession with very limited economic growth despite very low interest rates, the CNMI suffered a great loss of Japanese tourism and investments in recent years.

The effort

In view of these formidable challenges, my administration quickly moved to address the CNMI's situation. We raised utility rates to ensure full cost recovery for our public utility and ended our central government's subsidy of CUC. We revised our budget to reflect actual revenue collections and we made many drastic cuts, going from a spending level of some $248 million to $160 million today, in just two years. We enacted a new defined contribution plan for our government retirement program and temporarily suspended employer contributions to the pension program.

Although the CNMI still faces enormous challenges, my administration did meet with some successes. I have taken numerous trips to Asia, meeting with investors, persuading them to invest in the CNMI or expand their investments in the CNMI. I am very pleased with Kumho Asiana's expansion into our market, with South Korean tourism experiencing double digit growth over the past two years. Kumo Asiana, a large South Korean conglomerate, expanded flight service to our islands and committed at least $50 million for a resort development project. We secured more Northwest flights from Japan, including Osaka and Nagoya routes. We secured more investments for our emerging education industry, facilitating the establishment of a vocational nursing school, a South Korean boarding school, and an upcoming business and medical school.

The need for sound federal policy in the islands

Although we have made some notable progress, the CNMI economy is still very vulnerable to external factors beyond our control. One such factor is the ever rising cost of fuel, which creates upward inflationary pressures and which harms our efforts to stabilize our troubled public utilities. As you all know, the price of oil just exceeded $100 per barrel.

Another external factor beyond our control is federal policy toward our islands, which brings us to this hearing here today, to discuss the impact of federal minimum wage law in the CNMI. I submit to you today that the severe challenges I have just described would be further compounded exponentially by continued Federal minimum wage hikes. This is not my view alone. It is a view shared by nearly all of the members of our local business community. It is a view supported by objective economists at the U.S. Department of Labor, as made clear in a recent report. It is a view shared by many federal policy-makers when considering the economic plight of American Samoa. The CNMI is no different.

In the past, the U.S. federal government could have helped the CNMI by amending Headnote 3(a). Our garment industry could have been saved and other manufacturing businesses could have emerged with the change in trade law, but our federal government decided not to act to save the CNMI's manufacturing base.

This time we are not asking the federal government to take positive action to help the CNMI; we are merely asking that the federal government refrain from doing harm by allowing the unsustainable wage hikes to continue in view of our current economic challenges.

Our local economy has already been through the WTO change and the pullout of Japan Airlines in 2005. We have made progress in weathering those difficulties, but if our local economy is to recover, we must have realistic and reasonable wage rates our small local market can bear.

In the past, the local CNMI government was faulted for not having the political will to raise the minimum wage. That was a mistake. But today we face an entirely new economic situation.

I appeal to you now, on behalf of the economic life of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and on behalf of the welfare of our population, not to further harm the CNMI by allowing federal wage hikes to continue unabated without regard to the dire economic consequences to our struggling island residents.

The CNMI economy, in its present weakened state, and with all of the challenges we are currently facing, is in no condition to sustain further wage increases. The federal government should not force the CNMI to meet an economic standard it is wholly incapable of meeting under current circumstances. Our local economy cannot compete with a higher wage burden. We need wage costs our economy can afford to bear.

You have the facts and statistics. You have the U.S. Department of Labor report completed by objective economists. You have the testimony of the CNMI business community. You have the arguments for American Samoa that also apply to the CNMI. I urge you to defer future federal wage hikes until it is clear that our local economy can afford to sustain such increases with healthy economic growth.

Please allow me to complete my mission of reviving the CNMI economy for the benefit of the people of the CNMI.

Thank you for considering my testimony and the plight of our struggling Commonwealth.

A call for flexibility in minimum wage hike

Editor's Note: The following is the statement of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce on the impending increase in the minimum wage applicable to the CNMI. The statement was submitted to the U.S. Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee during a hearing held in Washington D.C. on February 28, 2008,

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce has, over at least the past decade, agreed that an increase in the minimum wage applicable to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands would be appropriate *at a rate and to a degree that would not prove ruinous to the Commonwealth economy*. The Chamber has consistently called for the determination of this level by various means of careful study and analysis. The Chamber has repeatedly advocated a collective effort by federal and local officials, along with the private sector, to find a solution to the Commonwealth's economic challenges, which would include measured increases in the minimum wage in a manner that our local economy could support.

While the Chamber of Commerce has time and again called for a realistic minimum wage proposal that takes into consideration the state of the Commonwealth's economy (as opposed to the vastly more mature, geographically distant, and fundamentally different economy of the fifty states), the regular response has been to ignore the discordant nature of the island and mainland economies and to demand an accelerated and immutable increase in the Commonwealth's minimum wage. Those who demand nothing less than the full implementation of the United States minimum wage in the Commonwealth do neither the islands nor the federal government any favors. To pretend that an island economy thousands of miles from the United States, with no remaining relatively large-scale industry other than tourism (which itself is substantially depressed), no military build-up subsidy, and fewer federal dollars flowing in (both historically and currently) than any other insular area, could sustain the same minimum wage required in other areas of the United States, is so unrealistic as to be disingenuous. The United States Department of Labor's January 2008 report, "Impact of Increased Minimum Wages on the Economies of American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands," explains that the increase of the Commonwealth's minimum wage to $7.25 per hour is roughly tantamount to imposing a minimum wage of $16.50 in the fifty states. The report also highlights the lack of timely labor market data (the collection of which, elsewhere in the United States, is the responsibility of federal agencies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau). The report concludes that further minimum wage increases in the Commonwealth will likely lead to a worsening of the current economic decline as well as to a possible population decline.

The Chamber's call, last year, for the implementation of a wage review board to increase wages in the Commonwealth in a rational and studied manner was nothing new. Neither was the disregard for this proposal. It is the same proposal the Chamber made in 1999 when Section 902 talks were underway. Then, as last year, the Commonwealth was facing full implementation of the federal minimum wage. Last year, the proponents of full implementation won. And now the Commonwealth is at an economic impasse. Compliance with the requirements of P.L. 110-28 will result in decreased work hours for many employees; it will result in decreased benefits for others. Some businesses will close; others will lay off employees in a desperate bid to remain afloat. Almost all businesses will be forced to pass the effects of the wage increase on to their customers in the form of higher prices for goods and services.

It is important to note that many companies in the Commonwealth pay in excess of the minimum wage mandated under the next scheduled increase. It is equally important to recognize that even those companies are far from immune to the likely effects of increases that are allowed to continue unrestrained by economic reality. As one Chamber member recently observed, "We depend on a healthy economy. The next increase will hurt us more, even though we have no minimum wage earners... We will close shop if business does not improve." Another Chamber member, whose company does employ minimum wage earners, outlined a scenario for companies who will be directly impacted by the next scheduled increase: "I am preparing to take home less money to feed my own family. There is no increase in sales to offset this mandatory increase, it has to come from somewhere, and since [we] have been reducing costs for over two years there is not much else to do, other than take it out of what little profit we are making."

Although we are not yet one year into the implementation of P.L. 110-28, there are thousands of fewer jobs available in the Commonwealth. While many of those jobs may have been minimum wage positions, the wage earners contributed to the local economy. During these past months, despite fewer available jobs for workers and fewer payroll dollars circulating in the economy, and while tourist numbers, the lifeblood of our islands, continue to languish near historic lows, we have faced ever-increasing utilities charges (our electric rate is the highest in the United States), we continue to lead the country in gas prices at the pump, and inbound waterborne freight charges continue to escalate. No matter what the increase to the minimum wage, everything from gasoline to produce will remain more expensive, and will represent a proportionally greater percentage of any paycheck, than those same items in the fifty states. Increasing the minimum wage increases the cost of doing business, and that increased cost is passed on to the consumer.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce—which has not and does not oppose reasonable and sustainable increases to the Commonwealth's minimum wage—requests that the United States Congress take immediate measures to halt the automatic minimum wage increases mandated by P.L. 110-28 and institute a system that relies on quantitative data and allows the flexibility necessary to implement increases in a manner that recognizes the unique nature of our island economy, the current economic depression we are experiencing, and our desire to not become the economic burden on the federal government that we surely would be should our isolated economy collapse.

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲83° ▼76°	▲85° ▼76°	▲85° ▼76°	▲85° ▼75°	▲84° ▼76°

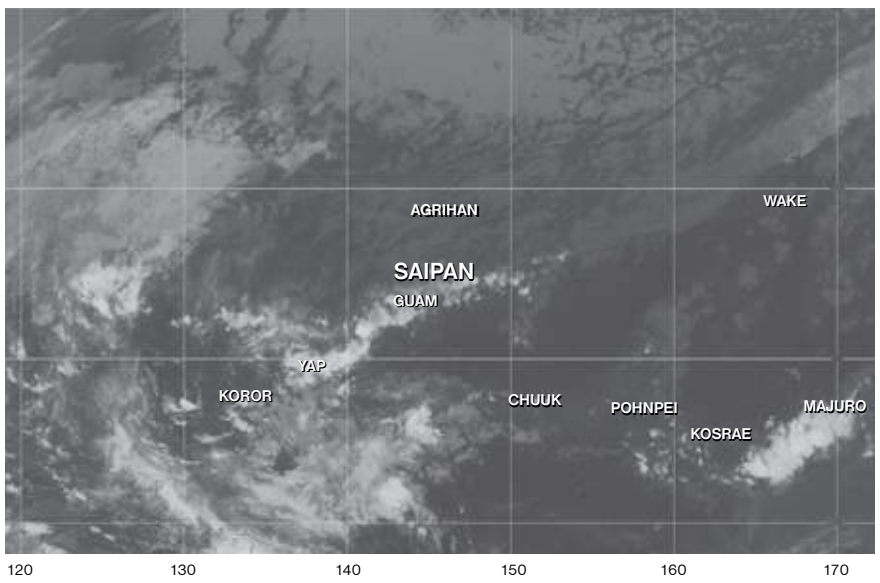
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	T'Showers	▲84	▼77
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼78
Yap	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼77
Chuuk	T'Showers	▲89	▼81
Pohnpei	Mostly Sunny	▲86	▼75
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼75
Majuro	Cloudy	▲84	▼75

Around The Globe

Auckland	Rain	▲76	▼63
Beijing	Showers	▲51	▼36
Hong Kong	Partly Sunny	▲66	▼58
Honolulu	Sunny	▲81	▼67
London	Cloudy	▲55	▼46
Los Angeles	Cloudy	▲70	▼48
Manila	Thunderstorms	▲81	▼74
Melbourne	Sunny	▲70	▼55
Miami	Cloudy	▲79	▼64
New York	Flurries	▲40	▼27
Osaka	Cloudy	▲48	▼35
Paris	Showers	▲53	▼43
Pusan	Sunny	▲54	▼34
Rome	Mostly Cloudy	▲58	▼43
Salem	Rain	▲50	▼34
San Francisco	Cloudy	▲60	▼43
Seoul	Sunny	▲44	▼26
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲50	▼33
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲47	▼27

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, FRIDAY, FEB. 29, 2008

Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A warm front runs northwestward from 22N180 to a low pressure system centered near 26N175E. Clouds and widespread rain are found along the warm front and in the vicinity of the low, and northward to beyond 25N. A cold front extends southwestward from the low to 17N156E, then westward through the CNMI near Anatahan and finally to beyond 130E at 17N. A shear line reaches southwestward from 17N156E to near Guam, then beyond 130E at 12N. Extensive cloudiness and scattered showers are occurring along these boundaries and northward to beyond 25N. A surface trough of low pressure stretches northeastward from EQ134E to 6N140E to near Guam at 14N146E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms associated with the trough are erupting near Guam within 30 miles of a line from 14N146E to 13N145E to 12N143E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are found over and south of Yap, bounded by a line from 10N138E to 10N141E to 5N146E to EQ146E to EQ138E and back to 10N138E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are also happening over Palau, or south of a line from 8N130E to 8N138E. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms across the southern Marshall Islands within 60 miles of a line from 3N167E to south of Majuro at 6N171E. Scattered showers are occurring as well southeast of Majuro within 70 miles of a line from 6N171E to 3N180, and also northeast of Majuro within 70 miles of another line from 6N171E to 176E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
4:23AM Today	High Tide:	1.4 Feet
7:52AM Today	Low Tide:	1.4 Feet
12:46PM Today	High Tide:	1.6 Feet
9:16PM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:34AM	6:25PM
Sunday	6:34AM	6:25PM
Monday	6:33AM	6:25PM
Tuesday	6:32AM	6:25PM
Wednesday	6:32AM	6:26PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	1:13AM	12:30PM
Sunday	2:06AM	1:23PM
Monday	2:57AM	2:18PM
Tuesday	3:45AM	3:14PM
Wednesday	4:31AM	4:10PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 15, 2008

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota

CO 9313	8:30am	9:05am	3,4,7

Saipan-Guam

CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9597	8:30am	9:20am	1,2,5,6
CO9313	8:30am	10:00am	3,4,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	Daily
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily

Saipan-Narita

NW 078	8:25am	1:30pm	Daily via Nagoya
NW 075	4:50pm	7:30pm	Daily

Saipan-Osaka

NW 083	4:30pm	7:25pm	Daily

Saipan-Nagoya

NW 078	8:25am	11:05am	Daily

Saipan-Manila

CO 895	4:45pm	6:35pm	6
CO 895	6:45pm	8:35pm	3

Saipan-Seoul

OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 606	3:30pm	7:00pm	2,4,6,7

Saipan-Busan

OZ 608	4:00am	7:35am	1,4,5,7

Saipan-Guanzhou

CZ 3008	5:00am	8:00am	2,6

Saipan-Shanghai

MU 590	4:20am	7:00am	2,6

Guam-Manila

CO 891	6:00am	10:30am	3 via Yap and Koror
CO 893	6:30am	8:05am	6
CO 893	8:25am	10:00am	2,7
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:45am	1,2,4,6,7

Guam-Hongkong

CO 909	7:45pm	10:40pm	1,5

Guam-Rota

CO 9598	10:15am	10:45am	1,2,6

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan

CO 9598	11:10am	11:45am	1,2,6

Guam-Saipan

CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	Daily
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9598	10:15am	11:45am	1,2,6 via Rota
CO9600	10:45am	11:35am	3,4,5,7
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

Narita-Saipan

NW 076	10:35am	3:05pm	Daily
NW 077	6:15pm	1:10am+1	Daily via Nagoya

Osaka-Saipan

NW 084	10:40am	3:10pm	Daily

Nagoya-Saipan

NW 077	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily

Manila-Saipan

CO 890	9:15am	2:55pm	6
CO 890	11:45am	5:35pm	3

Seoul-Saipan

OZ 605	9:00am	2:30pm	2,4,6,7
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6

Busan-Saipan

OZ 607	9:30pm	2:50am+1	3,4,6,7

Guanzhou-Saipan

CZ 3007	8:00pm	4:00am+1	1,5

Shanghai-Saipan

MU 589	8:05pm	3:00am+1	1,5

Manila-Guam

CO 894	11:20am	4:55pm	2,7
CO 894	7:45pm	1:20am+1	6
CO 892	9:45pm	5:25am+1	3 via Koror
CO 892	9:45pm	6:30am+1	3 via Koror and Yap
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7

Hongkong-Guam

CO 910	11:40pm	6:20am+1	1,5

Rota-Guam

CO 9313	9:30am	10:00am	3,4,7

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana; MU: China Eastern ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Sunday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $182. Off-island subscription rate is $376 per year. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

Schedule of Religious Services

CATHOLIC

Mt. Carmel Cathedral
Sunday Mass: 6am, 9am, 11am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm

Korean Center
Sunday: 10:30am
Wednesday: 10am
Thursday-Friday: 8pm
Saturday: 3pm and 7:30pm

Kristo Rai Parish
Sunday Mass: 6am, 8am and 9:30am
Monday- Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm
Saturday: 6am and 6pm

Nuestra Senora De Soledad Parish
Wednesday Mass: 6pm
First Friday Healing Mass: 6pm
Saturday Mass: 6pm
Sunday Masses: 7:30am & 9am

Saint Jude Parish
Sunday: 6am, 8am, 10am
Wednesday and Thursday: 6pm

San Antonio Parish
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Tuesday and Friday: 6pm

San Francisco de Borja-Rota
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6pm

San Isidro-Rota
Sunday: 5am and 10am
Monday-Wednesday: 7pm
Thursday-Saturday: 5am and 7pm

San Jose (Oleai) Parish
Sunday: 6am and 7:30am
Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday: 6pm

San Roque Parish
Sunday: 9am
Wednesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10:30am

San Vicente Parish
Sunday: 6am, 9am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6pm

Santa Remedios
Sunday: 7:30am
Tuesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10am-Baptism

Santa Soledad
Sunday: 7:30am

PROTESTANT

Born Again Christian (Upper Room Int'l Ministries), Saipan
Wednesday Prayer and Healing Night: 8-10:30pm
Saturday Tagalog Service: 8-10:30pm
Sunday English Service: 9:30-11am
Sunday School for Children: 10-11am
Sunday Filipino Service: 7-9pm

Calvary Baptist Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 9am
Sunday Morning Worship: 10am
Sunday Evening Worship: 6pm
Wednesday Prayer Service: 7pm

Chinese Christian Church of Saipan
Worship Services: Sunday, 10am and 7:30pm
Bible Study: Tuesday-Friday, 9:25pm

Cornerstone Christian Church, Saipan
Worship/Study Opportunities
Adult Sunday School: 9am
Youth Sunday School: 9am
English Worship Service Sunday: 10am
Sunday Service: 5:30pm
Worship/Fellowship Sunday: 9:30pm
Evangelism/Follow-up: Sunday/Monday: 1:30/7:30pm
Worship Team: Monday/Saturday-9pm;
Cell Groups Tuesday: 7:30pm
Mid-week Service: 7:30pm
Prayer Meeting Wednesday: 7:30pm
Leader's Bible Study Friday: 7:30 pm
Cornerstone School of Ministry Saturday: 7:30pm

Episcopal/Anglican Church on Saipan
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Worship Service Sunday: Holy Communion 9:00am
Place: Vicarage, Chalan Laulau,
Call 235-0545 for directions

Grace Christian Assembly, Saipan
Worship Service: 9am
GBI Classes: 4-6pm
Prayer Meeting: Monday-Saturday: 6am
Sunday: 7am
Home Cell Bible Study: Wednesday-Friday: 7pm
Youth Service: Friday: 5:30pm

Iglesia Ni Cristo, Saipan
Wednesday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Thursday: 5:30am (English); 7:45 pm (English)
Saturday: 5:30am (Tagalog); 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Sunday: 6:45am (English)
Children Worship Service: Sunday, 9am (English)

Immanuel United Methodist Church Koblerville
Sunday Services
8:00 AM Choir Rehearsal
9:00 AM Family Worship
3:00 PM Choir Rehearsal
Wednesdays at Parsonage
7:00 PM Prayer, Share and Care

Immanuel Methodist Church (Filipino Congregation)
Sunday: 7:00am-Choir Rehearsal
8:00am-Church Service (Tagalog)
9:15am-Sunday School
Wednesday: 8:00pm-Prayer Meeting
Thursday: 7:30pm-Choir Practice (Church)
Saturday: 8:00pm-Choir Practice (Parsonage)

Jesus is Lord Church, Saipan
English Service: 9-11am, Sunday
Tagalog Service: 6-8pm, Sunday

Korean Presbyterian Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 8:20am
Sunday Adult: 10am
Sunday Adult: 11:30am
Sunday Evening: 7:30pm
Wednesday: 8pm

Life in the Son Christian Fellowship, Saipan
Sunday Worship Service: 10am– 12noon
Tuesday: Leadership Institute 7pm-10pm
Wednesday: Corporate prayer 7pm-8pm
Last Friday of the month-prayer: 7pm-11pm
Friday: Youth on Fire: 7pm-9pm
Tel. No. 235-LIFE (5433)

Marianas Baptist Church, Saipan
English Worship Service: 9-10:30am
Evening Worship Service: 6-7pm
Children Sunday School: 9-10:30am
Tagalog Sunday School: 11am-12pm
English Sunday School: 11am-12pm
Korean Worship Service: 11am-12pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting:
English, 7pm-8pm
Korean: 8:30pm-9:30pm

Missions Connection Ministry
Every Sunday Celebrations:
10am (English), 6pm (Tagalog)
Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm
Youth Impact Friday: 7pm
Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

Northern Marianas Christian Church
Sunday Worship Service 10am Fina Sisu Housing FS#1 (Child care will be provided)
Friday Services @ 7pm Fina Sisu FS#1 for more info pls. contact Ryan 484-2620

Saipan Bible Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30-10am
Divine Worship: 10am-11:30am
Evening Service: 7pm-8:30pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8pm-9pm

Saipan Christian Church
Sunday: 7:30am-10am
Sunday: 6:30 pm -9pm
Monday: 8 pm -10pm (Prayer Meeting)
Thursday: 8pm-10pm (Cell Groups)

Saipan Church of Christ
Sunday Bible Class: 9am
Sunday Worship: 10am
Sunday Worship English: 6pm
Sunday Worship Tagalog: 7pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:30pm

Saipan Community Church
(Sunday Services)
Palau Service: 7:30am-9am
English Service: 10am-11:30am
Chuukese Service: 1pm-2:30pm
Filipino Service: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Saipan
(Saturday Church Services)
Sabbath School Program: 9-10am
Lesson Study: 10-10:40am
Divine Service: 11-12pm
Visitation: 3-4pm
Adventist Youth Program: 4:30-5:30pm
Sundown Worship: 6-7pm

First Baptist Church
(Formerly Saipan Baptist Church)
Afetna St., San Antonio
Sunday
9am Sunday school
10am Regular worship
6pm worship
Wednesday
7pm worship
Everyone is warmly welcome to attend our worship services. Transportation is readily available to anyone who needs a ride to our church. For further information, please call Pastor David M. Mclure at 234-1939/235-7779.

Thy Word Ministries Saipan Faith Center
Phone 234-0209
New Christian Charismatic Church Service located in Chalan Paio, Beach Road in the Sablan building on the 2nd floor above Subway Sandwiches.
Senior Pastors: George & Gail Kamakahi
Asst. Pastors: Eric & Penny Sakaguchi
Service Times
Sunday 10:00am Worship Service
Sunday 7pm Discipleship Classes
Tuesday 10:00am Bible Studies
Tuesday 6:00pm Intercessory Prayer
Tuesday 7:00pm Music Practice
Wednesday 7:00pm Mid-Week Service
Saturday 10:00am Evangelism

Upper Room International Ministries
Sunday 5:30am-6:30am
Morning prayer
7am-9am English service
7am-9am Sunday school
10am-12noon English service,
Koblerville
Wednesday 7pm-9pm Prayer meeting
Saturday 7pm-9pm Tagalog service
Venue: Jason Presbyterian Church
Gualo Rai, Saipan

Victory Chapel Christian Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30am
Sunday AM Worship:10:30am
Sunday PM Worship:7:00am
Wed Worship: 7:30pm
Prayer 45 min. Prior to Service Times
Morning Prayer: 6-8am M-S

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

MARCH 1, 1999

Plan for PR builds

Two key members of the legislature on Friday prodded Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio to look into the offer of the private sector to jointly discuss possible ways that will finance a badly needed public relations campaign for the Northern Marianas on the heels of increasing media firestorm. This effort may lead to a partnership between the island government and the business industry in addressing negative publicity that have besmirched the CNMI image in the international community, according to Rep. Karl T. Reyes, chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. "If everybody pitches in, then we can probably (hire a public relations firm)," he told in an interview.

Legislators: OIA use 'wrong' figures

Some lawmakers have disputed the claims of the Office of Insular Affairs that unemployment rate in the CNMI has risen to 16 percent, brushing aside the report as yet another attempt to hit on the island government over its labor and immigration policies. They maintained the figures presented by OIA are preliminary findings by the statistics office at the local commerce department, and thus do not represent conclusive statements on the employment rate of indigenous population on the island. "It's very, very erroneous figure. They can't even tally their own figures. I am trying to add them up, they don't add up at all," said Rep. Karl T. Reyes who is armed with records from OIA and the Department of Commerce to back up his claims.

MARCH 1, 2000

Jury acquits Sablan

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation Board Director Benjamin M. Sablan was acquitted by 12 jurors on all three bribery charges filed against him before the U.S. District Court involving a project partly funded by the federal government more than four years ago. Dozens of his friends and family packed the courtroom in Horiguchi Building when the jury read its verdict after two days of deliberating on testimonies and evidences presented at the trial. They hugged and shook hands with Mr. Sablan who was visibly moved by the acquittal. His lawyers had earlier expressed confidence at the closing arguments that there was no case against the CUC official.

Remittances reach $65M in 1999

Nonresident workers in the CNMI have remitted more than $65 million in 1999, up by at least $7 million from the figures registered during the previous year, government records showed. Northern Marianas-based guest workers sent out more than $58 million in 1998, about $6 million higher than the 1997 tally of $52.4 million, showing an increasing trend despite sharp reduction in the number of foreign labor in the islands. A report prepared by the Department of Commerce noted that remittance by Filipino workers in the islands declined in 1999 compared with the previous year level of $49 million to $45.4 million. In 1997, overseas contract Filipino workers remitted $48.3 million to the Philippines.

MARCH 1, 2001

House to kill 3-year limit law

Growing public clamor to repeal a law that restricts the stay of nonresident workers in the Northern Marianas to three years may already be in sight. The House of Representatives will deliberate today on a proposed measure that will completely repeal the three-year limit law, or which Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio signed as Public Law 11-69. House Floor Leader Rep. Oscar M. Babauta even went as far into saying that "Public Law 11-69 is dead, not it all depends on the Senate." He was referring to a possible action that may be taken by the House today on the law's repealer. Introduced by Rep. Malua T. Peter, the bill said the three-year limit on nonresident workers imposed by Public Law 11-69 has created an economic hardship to the Commonwealth business community. It also acknowledged the contributions of nonresident workers in the CNMI.

Ex-CPA official told to return overpaid retirement benefits

Retirement Fund officials yesterday asked a former ports authority official to reimburse overpayment of $110,000 in retirement benefits following review of erroneous accrued sick leaves. Appeals made by former Commonwealth Ports Authority security chief Joseph A. Reyes were thrown out by Fund board members after a series of hearings and evaluation of the case.

Business

Oil surges above $102

NEW YORK (AP)—Crude prices extended their march into record high territory Thursday, shooting up more than $2 a barrel as a falling dollar and the prospect of lower interest rates attracted more investors to the oil market. Retail gas prices, meanwhile, rose closer to records above $3 a gallon.

Light, sweet crude for April delivery rose $2.95 to settle at a record $102.59 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Prices continued rising after the Nymex closed, setting a new trading record of $102.97.

A pair of dismal economic reports drew more money into the oil market, as did Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's comments that the economy is not immediately threatened with stagflation, a combination of economic weakness and rising inflation. The Commerce Department said gross domestic product grew at only a 0.6 percent rate in the fourth quarter, below estimates and at only a fraction of the previous quarter's growth rate, while the Labor Department said applications for unemployment benefits rose by 19,000 last week, more than expected.

Rather than viewing such news as bad for oil demand, investors chose to see it as confirmation of their beliefs that the Fed will continue cutting interest rates to try to shore up the economy. Interest rate cuts tend to weaken the dollar, and crude futures offer a hedge against a falling dollar. Also, oil futures bought and sold in dollars are more attractive to foreign investors when the greenback is falling.

New day, new lows for dollar

NEW YORK (AP)—The dollar dipped further Thursday, reaching a new low against the euro, after data confirmed that the U.S. economy nearly braked to a halt at the end of last year—limiting the Fed's options as it tries to steer through the housing and credit crises.

The U.S. economy grew at a scant 0.6 percent pace in the October-to-December quarter, according to the Commerce Department report, compared with a much healthier 4.9 percent in the previous quarter.

That finding pushed the 15-nation euro to a record $1.5229 in New York—past its previous record of $1.5143 set Wednesday.

The euro settled at $1.5215 in late trading, up from the $1.5120 it was worth late Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the British pound rose to $1.9926 from $1.9842. The dollar dipped to 105.36 Japanese yen from 106.45 yen.

The dollar also dropped to 1.0503 Swiss francs from 1.0622 francs late Wednesday.

AP

A U.S. one dollar note is seen among other foreign currencies at Foreign Currency Express in downtown Los Angeles, Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2008.

Economy skids to near halt

WASHINGTON (AP)—The economy skidded to a near halt in the final quarter of last year, clobbered by dual slumps in housing and credit that caused people and businesses to spend and invest more sparingly.

The Commerce Department reported Thursday that the gross domestic product increased at a scant 0.6 percent pace in the October-to-December quarter. The reading—unchanged from an initial estimate a month ago—underscored just how much momentum the economy has lost. In the prior quarter, the economy clocked in at a brisk 4.9 percent pace.

Gross domestic product measures the value of all goods and services produced in the United States and is the best barometer of the country's economic health.

"The economy just kept its head above water," said Nigel Gault, economist at Global Insight.

Economists had thought the newly released fourth-quarter GDP would have been bumped up to a 0.8 percent growth rate. But the housing picture looked even more bleak in the new report.

Nation

Blast at Ill. shopping plaza injures 9

WAUKEGAN, Ill. (AP)—An explosion possibly caused by a gas leak ripped through a suburban Chicago shopping plaza Thursday, injuring at least nine people and rattling nearby buildings, fire officials said.

Eight people were taken to a hospital, none with life-threatening injuries, and another was treated at the scene, Deputy Fire Chief Dan Young said. A fire that erupted had been extinguished, and crews were nearly certain the rubble had been cleared by mid-afternoon but were seeking one person who had been reported missing, he said.

The blast struck around lunchtime in the business district about 40 miles north of Chicago, shattering windows and collapsing the roof of the plaza, which housed a cell phone shop, a tuxedo store and a hair salon, among other businesses.

Authorities believe the cause was a gas explosion, Young said.

Two of the eight people taken to the hospital were in serious condition, Young said. The injuries included smoke inhalation, bumps and bruises, he said.

Candi Rixie said she was taking orders at Leno's Submarine Shop a block away from the shopping plaza when the blast hit.

AP

Area fire fighters battle a fire and roof collapse from an apparent gas explosion at the scene of an apparent gas explosion at a hair salon in Waukegan, Ill., just after noon Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008.

"We felt like an earthquake, like somebody had hit the building with a car," she said.

Rixie said she ran out of the restaurant to see what had happened. She and others said they first thought they saw bodies in the street, but quickly realized it was clothes and mannequins that had been on display in a store and blown outside by the blast.

Gary Podyma was taking inventory at the Living Foods Pantry health food store across the street from the shopping building when he heard a loud explosion and his windows blew out.

Then he saw a big, brown cloud and debris coming toward him.

"To see a building coming toward you like that—words can't describe the feeling you get," he said. "It was frightening, it was ominous."

He said he also smelled a strong odor of gas immediately after the blast.

"It's amazing that anybody survived," he said.

A spokeswoman for People's Gas said a crew was on the scene but hasn't been able to get close enough to say what might have caused the explosion.

David Motley, a spokesman for the city of Waukegan, said the brick building was decades-old.

Clinton counting on women for comeback

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—Fighting to survive, Hillary Rodham Clinton is counting on female power to energize her faltering presidential bid. She's hoping a double-digit lead among women in Ohio is the answer.

"I am thrilled to be running to be the first woman president, which I think would be a sea change in our country and around the world," the New York senator said this week in Cleveland, emphasizing anew the pioneering aspect of her candidacy.

■ ■ ■

WASHINGTON (AP)—In a remarkable financial recovery, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton raised $35 million in February even as Democratic rival Barack Obama was outspending her in key March 4 battlegrounds.

Clinton

Clinton's fundraising more than doubled her January fundraising, when she collected $14 million to Obama's $36 million. Clinton has lost 11 straight contests since Super Tuesday on Feb. 5 and her ability to raise money was all the more notable coming in the midst of defeat.

But Obama has been raising money at an even greater rate and spending it, too. Some estimates place his February fundraising at more than $50 million—which would be about half of what he raised in all of 2007.

■ ■ ■

A woman in the White House, Clinton said, would present "a real challenge to the way things have been done, and who gets to do them and what the rules are."

The remarks had a call-to-action flair and underscored just how much she is relying on women, always a key part of her support, to help her win Ohio and, perhaps, Texas on Tuesday as she seeks to get back on track in the Democratic nomination fight.

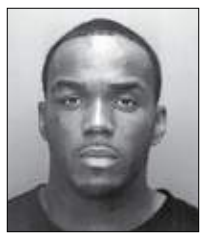
She has urgent reason to prod the sisterhood into action.

Illinois Sen. Barack Obama has racked up 11 straight wins to lead the convention delegate hunt. Clinton hasn't won a primary in a month and is looking for big-state victories to breathe new life into her campaign.

Clinton leads in Ohio in recent polling, while Obama has a slight edge in Texas.

Women may hold the key for Clinton, particularly in the Midwestern state. Polls in the past week have shown her with a wide advantage—17 percentage points in one poll, 18 in another—among Ohio women. She also leads among Texas women, but the margin is slimmer.

Twin porn actors are charged in rooftop burglary



Taleon Goffney

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Twin brothers who have appeared in hardcore gay-porn online videos are charged with the rooftop burglary of a South Philadelphia business and are suspected in dozens of similar crimes in at least three states, authorities said.

Keyontyli and Taleon Goffney, 25, of suburban Pennsauken, N.J., were arrested Feb. 19 after authorities from a multistate task force said they watched the twins break into a South Philadelphia beauty shop through the roof.

The brothers are suspects in dozens of burglaries committed over the past 18 months throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware, where intruders gained entry by hacking through the rooftops of businesses, the Philadelphia Daily News reported.

Keyontyli, arrested at the scene of the Philadelphia burglary, was released after posting bail. Taleon, arrested a short time later, was being held in a Philadelphia jail.

ACROSS THE NATION

Army manual upgrades nation-building

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. (AP)—The Army on Thursday rolled out the first revision of its operations manual since the Sept. 11 terror attacks, putting stability operations—nation-building—on par with combat. Army officials said the revision reflects a focus on fighting terrorism. The new manual reflects Army experiences over the past six years of fighting the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan and insurgents in Iraq, as well as with relief efforts after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Lt. Gen. William Caldwell IV, commander of Fort Leavenworth, where the document was produced, said the U.S. will focus on building its influence in nations plagued by conflicts so that it can make them stable and secure.

Crowded cribs linked to baby deaths

WASHINGTON (AP)—Parents are putting their babies at risk when they place pillows and other soft bedding in their cribs, the Consumer Product Safety Commission warned Thursday. From 2002 to 2004, 241 children under age 5 died in incidents involving nursery products. About 40 percent of the deaths involved cribs, with soft bedding cited as the leading contributing factor. Many of the children suffocated when lying face down on pillows or other bedding, the agency said. CPSC spokeswoman Julie Vallese said that cribs should be free of adult pillows and blankets, stuffed animals and baby quilts. To reduce risk of suffocation and sudden infant death syndrome, parents should place babies on their back in a crib that meets current safety standards, the agency said.

Bush says US not headed into a recession

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Bush said Thursday the country is not recession-bound and, despite expressing concern about slowing economic growth, rejected for now any additional stimulus efforts. "We acted robustly," he said. "We'll see the effects of this pro-growth package," Bush told reporters at a White House news conference, acknowledging that some lawmakers already are talking about a second stimulus package. "Why don't we let stimulus package 1, which seemed like a good idea at the time, have a chance to kick in?" Bush's view of the economy was decidedly rosier than that of many economists, who say the country is nearing recession territory or may already be there. "I'm concerned about the economy," he said. "I don't think we're headed to recession. But no question, we're in a slowdown."

Paulson rejects government bailouts

WASHINGTON (AP)—Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said Thursday that many proposals being put forward to deal with the housing slump would do more harm than good. While he still believes that the housing problem remains the biggest downside risk to the economy, Paulson said the issue needed to be put in perspective. He said 93 percent of all mortgages are being paid on time and that less than 2 percent are in foreclosure. "So while some in Washington are proposing big interventions, most of the proposals I've seen would do more harm than good," the secretary said in remarks prepared for delivery Thursday night before the Economic Club of Chicago. "I'm not interested in bailing out investors, lenders and speculators," he said. "I'm focused on solutions targeted at struggling homeowners who want to keep their homes."

Pelosi wants Bush aides investigated

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Speaker Nancy Pelosi asked the Justice Department on Thursday to open a grand jury investigation into whether President Bush's chief of staff and former counsel should be prosecuted for contempt of Congress.

Pelosi, D-Calif., demanded that the department pursue misdemeanor charges against former White House counsel Harriet Miers for refusing to testify to Congress about the firings of federal prosecutors in 2006 and against chief of staff Josh Bolten for failing to turn over White House documents related to the dismissals.

Pelosi

She gave Attorney General Michael Mukasey one week to respond and said refusal to take the matter to a grand jury will result in the House's filing a civil lawsuit against the Bush administration.

The White House branded the request as "truly contemptible." The Justice Department said it had received Pelosi's request and anticipated providing further guidance after Mukasey's review. It noted "long-standing department precedent" in such cases against letting a U.S. attorney refer a congressional contempt citation to a grand jury or prosecute an executive branch. The top House Republican called it "a partisan political stunt" and "a complete waste of time," according to a spokesman.

The Democratic-controlled House voted two weeks ago to hold Bolten and Miers in contempt for failing to cooperate with committee investigations.

"There is no authority by which persons may wholly ignore a subpoena and fail to appear as directed because a president unilaterally instructs them to do so," Pelosi wrote Mukasey. She noted that Congress subpoenaed Miers to appear before the House Judiciary Committee, which is investigating the firings.

Asia

30 die after Bangladesh ferry capsizes

PAGLA, Bangladesh (AP)—A ferry carrying more than 100 people collided with a cargo vessel and capsized in a river near the Bangladeshi capital Thursday, killing at least 30 people, authorities said.

The death toll could rise because many passengers were feared trapped inside the sunken craft, according to Sufia Begum, a Fire Brigade official in the capital, Dhaka.

Rescuers recovered 30 bodies after the wooden ferry MV Saurav sank in Buriganga River, Begum said, adding that most of the victims found so far were located inside the craft's hull.

She said 13 women and six children were among the dead in the accident at the town of Pagla, two miles south of Dhaka.

The ferry had been traveling from Dhaka to the nearby town of Taltala, Begum said.

The accident occurred after the ferry collided with a small cargo vessel, said Pagla police officer A.S.M Maniruzzaman. The ferry capsized in the calm river near shore and many people on board were able to swim to safety.

The police officer also said more people might be trapped in the sunken ferry, believed to be under about 45 feet of water.

Rina Aktar and her 10-month-old son survived, but her mother-in-law died.

Blast kills 12 in Pakistan border zone

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan (AP)—A pre-dawn explosion demolished a house in Pakistan's wild frontier zone on Thursday, killing up to 12 suspected militants, the military, intelligence officials and a local militant said.

The explosion "ripped through heavy explosives stored at a house" in a village in South Waziristan, a region bordering Afghanistan where militants linked to al-Qaida and the Taliban operate, army spokesman Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas told The Associated Press.

Abbas added that 10 to 12 people died in the explosion. He would not say who the slain men were, or how many foreigners may have been present.

The comments by Abbas came hours after an intelligence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record, said about 10 foreign militants were believed to have been killed.

Six others were wounded in the strike in the village of Kalosha, the official said, citing initial reports from informants in the area. He had no further details of the victims' identities.

The official, based in Dera Ismail Khan, a city near South Waziristan, said the suspects had been staying in the home of a tribesman.

A second intelligence officer said the explosion rattled the windows of his office in Wana, South Waziristan's main town, about six miles away. He said the nationalities and identities of those killed were unclear.

A local militant fighter, who did not want his name made public in case he is targeted by security forces, said at least nine of the tribesman's guests had been killed. He said they were all Afghan civilians, including children.

AP

Bhuri, looks at her baby girl in the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit at Rajasthan Hospital in Ahmadabad, India, Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008.

Thaksin back at center of Thai politics

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's homecoming Thursday was a triumphant return to the center of Thai politics despite the military's efforts to eradicate his legacy and keep him at bay.

Thaksin, who was ousted in a September 2006 coup, received a hero's welcome from thousands of supporters when he landed Bangkok's international airport to end 17 months of exile.

Although he faces corruption charges and has promised to stay away from politics, critics fear his return is a calculated step toward regaining power. His path back started with the victory of the pro-Thaksin People's Power Party in December elections—the first since the coup.

Indian newborn survives fall from train

AHMADABAD, India (AP)—A newborn girl fell through the toilet in a moving train and onto the tracks moments after her mother gave birth prematurely, surviving nearly two hours before being found, relatives said Thursday.

The infant's mother, who uses the single name Bhuri, was traveling with relatives on a train when she went to the bathroom shortly before midnight Tuesday and unexpectedly gave birth, said Arjun Kumar, her brother-in-law.

"Later, she fell unconscious and the baby fell through the toilet," he said. "Two stations later, we knocked at the door."

Bhuri opened the door, soaked in blood.

"When we asked her about what happened, she said the baby had fallen through onto the tracks," Kumar said.

Toilets on Indian trains usually have holes that open directly onto the tracks, and there were no indications that authorities doubted Bhuri's story or planned to investigate.

Kumar said that after finding Bhuri, relatives pulled the train's emergency brake and notified railway officials. A search was quickly organized, and guards at one of the stations the train had passed soon found the baby.

"She was on the rail track for almost 1 1/2 to two hours," said Dr. Gautam Jain, a pediatrician at Rajasthan Hospital in Ahmadabad, in the western state of Gujarat, where the baby and mother were taken.

World

Israel kills 20 Palestinians in Gaza

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—A bloody spike in Israel-Hamas fighting put the Israeli city of Ashkelon and its 110,000 residents at the center of an intensifying militant rocket barrage Thursday—and Israel's defense minister warned he would invade Gaza, if necessary, to halt the attacks.

Israel launched nearly a dozen airstrikes, killing 20 Palestinians, Gaza hospital officials said. The attacks included a not-so-veiled warning to Gaza's Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh—a missile strike on a guard post outside his home. Hamas leaders have been in hiding in recent weeks, though Israel has so far only targeted militants, not Hamas politicians.

The dead Thursday included members of rocket squads, as well as five children, ranging in age from 8 to 12, who their relatives said were playing soccer when they were killed in a missile strike.

Israel has been reluctant to invade Gaza, amid concerns of getting bogged down there, but Defense Minister Ehud Barak told his security chiefs Thursday that an offensive is a definite option. "The major ground operation is real and tangible. We are not afraid of it," Barak said, according to a participant who spoke on condition of anonymity because the top-level session was held in secrecy.

Barak also told Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the British foreign minister in phone conversations that Israel would step up its response to the rocket fire, but a ground offensive wasn't imminent. Security officials said an invasion would have to wait until clouds clear in the spring.

The latest spike began Wednesday, when five Iranian-trained Hamas militants, including two rocket masterminds, were killed in an Israeli airstrike in southern Gaza.

Victims denounce racist South African video

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa (AP)—Four black university workers expressed pain and anger Thursday over being duped by white students into eating food allegedly tainted with urine for a video.

The video, which shows four women and one man on their knees eating the food, has been seen around the world, exposing deep racial tensions in South Africa more than a decade after Apartheid ended. Only the women attended a news conference at the University of the Free State to express their outrage.

"We feel pain," said Emma Koko, 40, who has been working at the school for 20 years and whose son attends classes there. "It's something we were not expecting. We regard them (the students) as our children."

The video depicts a mock initiation ceremony into a campus residence, with the middle-aged black cleaners portraying students.

Britain's Prince Harry in Afghanistan

AP

In this image made available in London, Thursday Feb. 28, 2008, Britain's Prince Harry patrols through the deserted town of Garmisir, Afghanistan, close to Forward Operating Base Delhi, on Wednesday Jan. 2, 2008.

LONDON (AP)—The secret is out: Prince Harry has been serving on the front line with his British army unit in one of Afghanistan's most lawless and barren provinces.

Harry is the first royal to serve in a combat zone since his uncle Prince Andrew flew helicopters during Britain's war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands in 1982.

British officials had hoped to keep the 23-year-old's deployment secret until he had safely returned, but they released video of Harry serving in Helmand Province after a leak appeared on the U.S. Web site the Drudge Report.

The planned deployment had been disclosed to reporters, with no specific date, but was not reported previously under a pool agreement between the Ministry of Defense and all major news organizations operating in Britain, including The Associated Press. The news blackout was intended to reduce the risk to the prince and his regiment.

WORLD BRIEFS

Abuse signs found at British kids' home

ST. MARTIN, Jersey (AP)—Police investigating widespread child abuse at a closed children's home said Thursday they made finds of "some significance" in the rubble of an underground chamber where children are thought to have been physically abused and punished. "They are items which witnesses have said were in there when offenses were committed against them," deputy police chief Lenny Harper told reporters outside the building on the British island of Jersey where the abuses are said to have occurred. Harper, who heads the investigation, would not, however, say what items were found or what they were used for.

Al-Maliki: Iraqis are reconciling

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraq's prime minister declared Thursday that national reconciliation was moving forward despite the embarrassing collapse of a deal to hold provincial elections and a warning of possible escalating Shiite feuds over the failure. It was a day of charged rhetoric—heightened by a flurry of political drama. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who is part of the nation's Shiite majority, spoke from one of the sect's holiest sites—the shrine of Imam Hussein, 50 miles south of Baghdad. The city is the centerpiece of Arbaeen, a commemoration that marks the end of the mourning period that follows the anniversary of Hussein's martyrdom in the seventh century. The holiday wound up Thursday.

Fisherman missing after trawler sinks

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)—A commercial fisherman who survived 30 hours in the water after his trawler sank recounted his harrowing ordeal Thursday, telling how he clung desperately to a fiberglass cooler lid while trying vainly to help his exhausted skipper stay afloat. John Jarrett said the shrimp boat's captain, Charlie Picton, held on for hours but eventually drifted away, according to a friend of the crew, Mark McMurtrie. Authorities called off an air search for Picton, 40, late Thursday. "The evidence suggests that the victim has drowned," a police statement said.

Girl killed on Egypt-Israel border

EL-ARISH, Egypt (AP)—A teenage Bedouin girl was fatally shot Thursday in the Sinai Peninsula near Egypt's border with Israel, Egyptian officials said. The girl, identified as 12-year-old Samah Nayyef Abu Garad, was hit in the head by a bullet, witnesses and an Egyptian security official said. It was not clear who was to blame for the death, with Egyptian officials and a witness citing a stray bullet coming from across the border, and the Israeli military saying no shooting had occurred on their side.

Maharlika – PinoyNews

Two ex-presidents to join RP rally

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Two former presidents promised to join thousands of protesters Friday in a big interfaith rally pressing for President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's resignation over a raging corruption scandal.

Soldiers and police went on high alert, setting up checkpoints at major highways, as buses of demonstrators headed to the financial district of Makati where organizers expected 50,000 people—the biggest crowd so far in weeks of protests.

They will be joined by former presidents Corazon Aquino—who led the 1986 "people power" revolt that toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos and restored democracy—and Arroyo's predecessor Joseph Estrada, who was ousted over massive corruption in 2001.

Both of them have called on Arroyo to step down.

In nationally televised Senate hearings, watched by millions, former consultants for a US$330 million (€223 million) telecommunications contract with Chinese company ZTE Corp. have described how the president's husband and the country's elections chief—who has since quit—benefited from huge kickbacks linked to the aborted contract.

Arroyo has not directly addressed the allegations against her and her husband but says that she opposes corruption and that her family does no business with the government. ZTE also has denied the allegations.

The scandal deepened after Arroyo said in a radio interview she was warned of anomalies in the deal the night before she flew to China to sign it last April. She has since ordered an investigation by the Justice Department and the ombudsman, but the opposition pounced on her comments in a bid to prove she abetted corruption.

The latest trouble—after she faced down three impeachment bids and four coup plots in her seven years in power—mobilized opposition groups from the left and the right and the center of the political spectrum—left-wing activists, students, middle-class professionals, clergy, business executives.

AP

Students display messages during a rally at the University of Makati campus at the financial district of Makati city east of Manila, Philippines, Thursday Feb. 28, 2008, to call for the resignation of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Peso soars then pulls back to P40.48:$1

MANILA—The peso reached a new eight-year high of 40.25 to the dollar during trading Thursday on strong dollar inflows from foreign investors seeking higher yields in Asian emerging markets, but lingering domestic political jitters pulled it back to 40.48 at close of trading.

The peso opened trading at 40.30 and hit a new eight-year peak for the second day in a row alongside a regional currency market boosted by expectations of further interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve.

At the close, it was down 0.15 from Wednesday's finish of 40.33 to the dollar as the market remained jittery over new mass actions being planned by civil society groups seeking the ouster of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Nicholas Kwan, a Hong Kong-based economist at British bank Standard Chartered, said the peso would likely peak at 38 or 39 to the dollar early this year but stabilize back at 40 by yearend.

Kwan said he would be concerned about Philippine politics only if it threatened to reverse the momentum of economic policy reforms set in place over the years.

In the near term, he said, the Philippines will likely benefit from prospective interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve that would drive more funds from the US to high-yield Asian assets. But he said the gains would be tempered by an expected rebound of the greenback in the second and third quarters of the year.

Saipan group donates $8K for classroom construction

The Simbang Gabi Committee of the Filipino Community Foundation CNMI, Inc. has turned over to Philippine Consul General Wilfredo DL. Maximo a check in the amount of $8,000 for their second classroom building donation, to be located at Labnig Elementary School in Malinao, Albay.

During the simple turnover ceremony held Jan. 28, 2008, at the Filipino Workers Resource Center, Maximo, speaking on behalf of the Philippine government, expressed sincere gratitude for the group's sacrifices and generosity, which he said is a manifestation of the Filipino bayanihan spirit and OFW philanthropy.

Maribel Loste, president of the Filipino Community Foundation, said that her late father, Nicolas Loste and former FilComFound president, would have been very glad of this accomplishment. Being an educator herself, she expressed the continued commitment of the group to education-related projects.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Filipino Community Foundation turns over $8,000 check donation to Simbang Gabi Committe to build a new classroom at the Labnig Elementary School in Malinao, Albay. Left to right: Filipino Community Foundation president Maribel Loste, Simbang Gabi Committe former chair Eddie Caranzo, consul general Wilfredo DL. Maximo, and Simbang Gabi Committee chair Danilo I. Domingo.

Danny I. Domingo, the present chairman of the Simbang Gabi Committee, expressed his appreciation and thanks to Mount Carmel Cathedral and all the Simbang Gabi 9-day coordinators and the Filipino community of Saipan for their hard work and contributions.

The recipient school was on the list of schools in the Bicol Region most in need of classroom donations endorsed by then DOLE Undersecretary Danilo P. Cruz last year, in the aftermath of the deadly and destructive Typhoon Reming that struck the area.

In 2005, the Simbang Gabi Committee donated funds for the construction of a 2-classroom building at Lalawigan Central Elementary School, Borongan, Eastern Samar. It was inaugurated on Aug. 19, 2005, with no less than the late Nicolas B. Loste, president of the Filipino Community Foundation, in attendance. ***(PR)***

LABOR FRONT

The periodic exit exemption

By FERDIE P. DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Q: How can an employer get a key employee exemption pursuant to the periodic exit requirement?

A: According to the rules and regulations of the Public Law 15-108 (new labor reform law), employers who carry out the periodic exit requirement of at least 20 percent of the exit-eligible work force during the period from Jan. 1, 2008 through Dec. 31, 2008 will be able to claim a key employee exemption for an additional three percent of the full-time work force.

Employers who carry out the periodic exit requirement of at least 30 percent of the exit-eligible work force from Jan. 1, 2009 through Dec. 31, 2009 shall be able to claim a key employee exemption for an additional two percent of their exit-eligible work force.

■ ■ ■

Q: When can employers with only one exit-eligible employee accomplish the periodic exit for that worker?

A: According to the regulations, employers with only one exit-eligible worker should make the periodic exit for that employee no later than Sept. 30, 2009 unless alternative arrangements are made with the Labor Director before June 30, 2009. The Labor Director will accommodate reasonable requests based on personal needs, scheduling problems, vacation or school requirements, or other factors.

■ ■ ■

Q: What will happen if Labor finds that periodic exits have not been accomplished by September 2008?

A: The regulations state that in the event Labor determines that periodic exits have not begun or been accomplished by at least 30 percent of the exit-eligible alien workers by Sept. 30, 2008, Labor will hold a lottery.

The lottery will determine which exit-eligible alien workers shall begin the periodic exit during the period Jan. 1, 2009 through March 30, 2009 in order to ensure that a sufficient number of exits will occur in order to keep the exit program on schedule so that there is no bunching of exits at the end of the initial three-year period.

In the event that Labor finds out that periodic exits have not begun by at least 60 percent of the exit-eligible foreign workers by Sept. 30, 2009, Labor will hold a lottery. The lottery's purpose is to determine which exit eligible alien workers shall begin the periodic exit during the period Jan. 1, 2010 through March 30, 2010 in order to keep the exit program on schedule so that there is no bunching of exits at the end of the initial three-year period.

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Obama backs pension benefits for Filipino WWII veterans

By AUDREY McAVOY
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

HONOLULU (AP)—U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama supports a bill that would award pension benefits to Filipinos who fought under the U.S. flag during World War II when their country was a U.S. colony.

Obama issued a statement this week urging his colleagues in Senate to provide the veterans with the recognition he says they deserve.

"Approximately 250,000 Filipino troops joined American forces to fight in World War II, but too many of these heroes are still being denied benefits," said the statement, which was dated Monday and appeared on his campaign Web site.

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee already has passed a broad bill that includes the benefit measure. The full Senate has yet to vote on the legislation.

The committee's ranking Republican, Sen. Richard Burr, opposes the Filipino veterans measure. He's submitted an alternative bill that excises that portion of the legislation, saying the government should instead spend its money on veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

New witness links Mike Defensor

Madriaga: He brokered kickback of First Couple

By DONA PAZZIBUGAN, JULIET JAVELLANA
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA—Michael Defensor, a former chief of staff of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, played a key role in the $329-million broadband deal with China's ZTE Corp. besides giving Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. P50,000 to allegedly keep him from testifying on the anomalous contract in the Senate.

Senate witness Dante Madriaga disclosed Thursday that Defensor took part in discussions on the National Broadband Network deal purportedly to look after the First Couple's financial interest.

At the hearing conducted by the Senate blue ribbon committee's technical working group, Madriaga said Defensor attended the meetings of the group of then Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr., who has been accused of brokering the deal, to discuss the "commissions" for Malacañang.

Battery of questions

Madriaga's latest disclosure was still part of his Senate testimony as he submitted himself Thursday to a battery of questions before the TWG, composed of the legal staff of senators.

The TWG asked Madriaga to substantiate his impromptu testimony at the Senate hearing on Tuesday at which he named the President and her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, as part of the "Greedy Group plus plus" that demanded huge kickbacks which jacked up the cost of the NBN project from $130 million to $329 million.

At the TWG hearing, Madriaga handed over a document called "National Broadband Network Project Overview Statement" signed by Howard Xue on behalf of ZTE and Leo San Miguel and Madriaga as consultants.

He also gave a copy of an undated memorandum of understanding on several projects, including the NBN, between ZTE International Investment Ltd. (sister company of ZTE Corp.) and the Philippine government.

It was signed by Yu as then president of ZTE International Investment and Trade Secretary Peter Favila, and by ZTE Corp. chair Hou Weigui and Defensor, who was then the presidential chief of staff, as witnesses.

In a brief interview after the hearing, Madriaga said he was told that Defensor was present at the meetings in which the Abalos group and ZTE officials discussed under-the-table matters.

Asked if they were talking about "commissions," Madriaga replied: "Yes, ang pinag-uusapan doon, 'others.'"

He stressed, however, that he saw Defensor at a meeting only once.

Defensor denied Madriaga's claim. "That's a total falsehood. I don't know how much he is being paid to say those things," he said in a phone interview.

Defensor said he was not present at a meeting attended by Abalos and ZTE officials at the Wack-Wack Golf and Country Club sometime in June 2006. "No, I haven't sat down with the ZTE people," he said.

Madriaga said he saw Defensor at that meeting in Wack Wack.

"I don't know him. I've never seen him. I've never spoken to him. I don't know where he's coming from. From what I heard, he's been asking money for his testimony and the Inquirer even printed that," Defensor said.

$181M in kickback/profit

Claiming to be a ZTE technical consultant to the project, Madriaga said the First Couple along with ZTE Corp. and the group of Abalos stood to pocket a total of $181 million in kickbacks and [profit] from the Chinese government loan that would have financed the project.

Madriaga said he saw Defensor at a meeting on June 18, 2006, at Wack Wack in Mandaluyong City. [Abalos served as president of the Wack-Wack golf club and mayor of Mandaluyong.]

The witness said the meeting was attended by Abalos, his chief of staff Jimmy Paz, his associates Ruben Reyes, former police official Quirino de la Torre and former Home Cable owner Leo San Miguel.

ZTE executives Yu Yong and Fan Yang were also at the meeting, according to Madriaga.

He said the ZTE officials and the Abalos group were just beginning their discussions at the time.

He said he only saw Defensor once but his [Madriaga's] immediate boss, San Miguel, had told him that Defensor was at the other meetings of the group up to October 2006.

Asked what Defensor's involvement was, Madriaga said: "Tinitignan niya kung ano ang ginagawa dito para sa Palasyo (He was trying to determine what the group was doing for the Palace)."

He was not asked to elaborate.

AP

In this photo released by the Presidential Close-in Photographers Office, PCPO, Malacanang Palace in Manila, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is prayed over by Catholic priests from her home province of Pampanga during their courtesy at Malacanang Palace in Manila Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008.

18 Pampanga priests pray over Arroyo in Palace

By MICHAEL LIM UBAC
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA—Storming heaven with their pleas, 18 priests from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's home province of Pampanga prayed over her in Malacañang Thursday, on the eve of an interfaith rally to press for her resignation.

As if that's not enough, Arroyo's allies in the local governments are also spearheading "Masses for peace and sobriety" all over the country Friday in support of her.

Arroyo is battling fresh calls for her to step down amid the political crisis triggered by allegations that she and her husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, received kickbacks from the now scrapped $329-million national broadband contract with China's ZTE Corp.

Msgr. Eugenio Mercado Jr., parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes in Angeles City, said the priests voluntarily came to the Palace to pray for Arroyo as well as for unity in the country.

"All of us need prayers, especially at this time," Mercado said in an interview.

Asked what the priests asked of God, he said: "We pray for healing. We pray that God bless our land, and we pray for the Filipino people."

Mercado denied the Pampanga priests were taking sides politically.

"There are no political issues involved here," he said.

"The Pampanga clergy (came) to pray over the President. That is the main objective. We pray for unity among Filipinos ... and we pray for the President today."

Asked if they were implicitly expressing support for Arroyo, Mercado said: "When we pray, we ask for God's support, and so we support the President."

False prophets

Mercado stressed the priests had not taken any side on calls for Arroyo's resignation either.

Malacañang hoped the participants at Friday's prayer rally in Makati City, organized by various groups opposed to Arroyo, would use the occasion to heed the call of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines "for discernment and prayerful reflection."

Deputy presidential spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo warned of false prophets in their midst.

"This will be the best time for all concerned to open their hearts and minds to seek truthful understanding of the current events," Fajardo said.

Support from local gov't units

"We must all be wary of the unseen hands who may be using the current situation to foment hatred, distrust and chaos in our society. We must heed the warning of the Holy Book of false prophets in our midst."

She warned against "scheming groups or individuals who are bent on destroying our democratic way of life."

The President's allies—led by officials of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, the League of Provinces of the Philippines, the League of Cities of the Philippines, the League of Municipalities of the Philippines and the Liga ng mga Barangay sa Pilipinas—are also offering "Masses for peace and sobriety" around the country in support of the CBCP call for "communal action."

In a joint statement, they said they were sponsoring the pro-peace Masses "in a dramatic show of support for what the CBCP had called 'prayerful community reflection' as the new and apt incarnation of EDSA-style people power."

They expected these Masses would usher in "a moral, judicious and legal closure to the botched National Broadband Network deal."

"Today's Masses are also meant to deliver a resounding message that an overwhelming majority of our people, especially in the countryside, are fed up with the political noise that the opposition groups are trying to stir up in Metro Manila ahead of 2010," they said.

EU to give RP $92M grants to boost reforms, fight poverty

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The European Union will give the Philippines €61 million (US$92 million) in grants to boost health services, peace efforts with Muslim rebels and human rights protection, officials said Thursday.

"The (EC) reaffirms its commitment to help the Philippines in its economic, social and political reform processes by providing support to assist in the fight against poverty, to encourage integration into the world economy, to promote good governance and human rights, and to help strengthen the relationship between the EC and the Philippines," said Ambassador Alistair MacDonald, the European Commission's head of delegation.

MacDonald said the new funds, to be disbursed through 2010, will bring total EU funding for the Philippines to more than €1 billion (US$1.5 billion) since cooperation funding began in 1976.

Death toll in floods, landslides climbs to 45

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The death toll in floods and landslides that have lashed the eastern and southern Philippines for two weeks has climbed to 45, with eight people missing, officials said Thursday.

Fed by heavy rains since Feb. 12, floods have inundated entire towns and displaced more than 41,000 people in 12 provinces, destroying roads and bridges and triggering landslides, the National Disaster Coordinating Council reported.

Nine more bodies were recovered in four eastern provinces, including a soldier who drowned in Camarines Norte province and a 21-year-old woman killed by a landslide in Sorsogon, the agency said.

A 52-year-old man died in another landslide in southern Compostela Valley, pushing the death toll since Monday to 45 from 35. At least 31 others have been injured.

Infrastructure and agricultural damage totals more than 1.3 billion pesos (US$32 million; €22 million), mostly on Leyte and Samar islands, about 570 kilometers (350 miles) southeast of the capital, Manila, the agency said.

A low-pressure area and the tail of a cold front have brought continuous heavy rains to eastern and southern portions of the archipelago, the weather bureau said.

Maharlika – PinoyStyle

Cuyo connection

By BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

CUYO, Palawan—Actress Judy Ann Santos brought all sorts of spices to this small island so that she could whip up special meals for her co-stars and boyfriend Ryan Agoncillo who acted as still photographer throughout the three-week shoot for Panoramanila Pictures' "Ploning."

"One Sunday, since it was my day off, we had a barbecue party," Judai related. "We ate on banana leaves. My Cuyonon dialect coach Ate Marose [Quejano] also gifted us with small crabs called peye ... whose meat is very sweet when cooked."

"We had a bonfire by the beach," Ryan recalled. "We couldn't have had that much fun in other provinces."

Apart from the beach, which is just a quick stroll from where Judai stayed, she also loved the film's main set, dubbed Ploning's house. It's an ancestral home owned by a former lady mayor.

Previously in ruins, the house was renovated by the production design team led by Raymund George Fernandez. And then it was returned to its former dilapidated state for the film's present-day scenes (featuring Tessie Tomas and Beth Tamayo).

Although it was Judai's first time on Cuyo, she had become familiar with the island through the film's director, Dante Nico Garcia, whom she fondly calls Ga.

"Seven years ago, I helped Ga with his foundation Lyrics and Sheets' fundraiser for Cuyo's hospital," she recounted. "He showed me pictures of the place. It was so sad; it didn't have enough bedsheets."

INQUIRER.NET

Buddies since the 1990s, Direk Ga and Judai exchange roles. He hams it up while she tinkers with the camera.

Judai and Ga set up screenings of Chris Martinez's short films in her old bar, Kilimanjaro, and raised P20,000.

In the middle of the shoot earlier this month, the hospital staff hosted a thanksgiving party for the entire cast.

Last year, co-star Meryll Soriano, pregnant with son Elijah at the time, was among "the first to try the Doppler (ultrasound test equipment), which she had helped purchase through her own contributions," said Dante.

Another "Ploning" cast member, Mylene Dizon, joined a round of "Game KnB" and won P200,000 for the island, related Dante. "Later, when she received a $2,000-gift, she started a scholarship foundation."

Now that they've actually been to Cuyo, they've become more "protective" of the island and its people.

"I used to hear of Cuyo only as part of the weather report in the news," Judai explained. "But now I admire Cuyonons all the more."

They have such a beautiful outlook in life, she said. "No wonder Ga is bubbly. He grew up in a place that is simple, and yet its culture is very rich."

"Like most Cuyonons, Ga loves and is proud of this island," co-star Eugene Domingo pointed out.

"I'd be heartbroken if a typhoon passed by this area," insisted cast member Ces Quesada.

After going home, co-actor Gina Pareño kept calling and texting Ces and company who were still on the island. "I got homesick. I missed Cuyo," she said.

"I just hope that the island will be protected," said Mylene, "that it will not be taken advantage of by foreigners."

Greta, Nadia in a shouting match

By Dolly Anne Carvajal
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA—Erstwhile best friends Gretchen Barretto and Nadia Montenegro's word war has gone overboard. It was triggered by Nadia's allegedly texting their common friends fabricated stories about Tony Boy Cojuangco throwing Greta out of their mansion because of her rumored affair with businessman Dodie Puno.

They reportedly had a face-to-face encounter in Rembrandt last Feb. 22, which only aggravated the situation. Supposedly with them in the room were Dodie, Boy Asistio (Nadia's longtime partner), Tanya Montenegro and a relative of Dodie's.

An insider recounts for us juicy parts of what supposedly transpired that fateful afternoon. It could well be one of RP show biz's historical, este, hysterical moments:

Nadia shouted at Greta, "Baboy ka!" Greta fired back, "Mas baboy ka! And then she blurted out one of Nadia's darkest secrets which stunned Boy Asistio. (Clue: It involves an actor with foreign blood who's making a comeback.)

Boy (who likes gambling) looked liked he lost the biggest gamble of his life. He was advised that maybe Nadia needed professional help for the sake of their kids, that she seemed to have a bipolar disorder. My source also says, "Students pa si Greta and Nadia ay may lihim na inggit na si Nadia kay Greta na dala-dala niya until now."

My source adds: Greta loves Tonyboy but she's thrilled about Dodie's marriage proposal. Tonyboy also wants to marry Greta but his annulment hasn't come through. Until that happens, Tonyboy will just put up with Greta's partying and casual flirtations. His only condition is that she's back home when their daughter Dominique wakes up.

Lea's blog

The ever-gracious Lea Salonga has allowed me to share with you again portions of her latest blog. Birthday cheers, Lea! Here's to more years that are well-lived by well-loved you!

'Birthday Rumination'

As I turn 37 at the end of this workweek, I found myself awake until the wee hours of the morning ruminating on whatever lessons I might have come away with in my short life … and so far, I've learned that:

- A side trip can prove more fruitful than the initially intended journey;
- Long conversations with people who "get it" make time pass so quickly that you wonder where it's gone;
- Disappointment will exist, no matter how you try to avoid it;
- Clean and freshly painted toenails can give joy beyond compare [on] a bad day;
- Acting on one's impulses can prove right some of the time;
- You don't always get what you want, but pray that you always get what you need;
- There is beauty in unexpected places;
- There is such a thing as "enough";
- It would have been more prudent to wait, after all;
- Every day is a gift to not be wasted doing absolutely nothing;
- Most of the time, there's nothing on television;
- Minding someone else's business can be counterproductive … I mean, we have our own business to mind;
- As a nation of 7,107 islands, if we each fix our own part of the island, we can then fix the nation.

Echo to meet Heart's dad

Jericho Rosales is overjoyed that he finally set foot on the "territory" of his GF Heart Evangelista's family during her birthday held at the Ongpauco Bldg. (Heart's father is Reynaldo, brother of resto magnate Rod Ongpauco.)

Heart had a falling out with her dad sometime ago. "It's an answered prayer for us," Echo beamed. Will the next occasion be a dinner with Heart's dad? "Hopefully," he said. "It would be awkward to ask him questions about Heart but if I get a chance, I'd ask him what his dreams are for her ... "

Happiness echoes all over Jericho's heart.

PERSONAL FINANCE

How much to set aside for a rainy-day fund

Question: I know I need to have a savings fund in case of emergencies, but it is not easy to have one because of so many other obligations. Advice from money experts ranges from three months to six months worth of expenses. How do I know how much I will need? Is there a formula I can use? - Gladys G.

Answer: It is difficult to start saving when bills are endless and each month seems longer than usual. But saving is one of those things in life you must not postpone, or worse, ignore.

According to the recently released Citi Fin-Q survey , a study designed to measure the financial quotient (FQ) or financial intelligence of Filipino consumers, more than half of the 400 respondents aged 18 to 40 years old believe in the importance of saving.

"The problem lies in having the discipline to do so, which could be due to lack of resources or financial knowhow," says Mark Jones, Citibank Philippines' Country Business Manager.

The survey also revealed that only one out of 10 Filipinos is consciously saving up for retirement. "The rest have some savings but don't know if it will be enough, others have no idea at all on how much they need or have not started planning," says Jones.

And here's a matter of concern: According to Jones, if the respondents lost their jobs tomorrow, or fall ill and cannot work, it will only take nine weeks (or just a little over two months) before their savings run out.

Nine weeks. That may not be enough to get back on one's feet. Thus, there is a need for an emergency fund that should cover anywhere from three months' to six months' worth of expenses. This will help you tide over the tough times until you get back on track. Besides, borrowing money to cover emergencies will cost you more.

Should you save for three months' or six months' worth of expenses? Some financial experts advise only three months' worth of expenses in the emergency fund if you are employed. If you are self-employed, they say you'll need six months' worth of expenses.

But of course, the more you save, the better. You do not know when bad things may happen and for how long they will last. Save at least six months' worth of your expenses - living expenses, bills, saving for a child's education, and the like.

As to your big challenge: How to save for an emergency fund when there doesn't seem to be enough funds in the first place.

Here are some tips:

1. Stick to your goal. If you say to yourself that you will start an emergency fund, be committed to do all it takes to fulfill that goal.

2. Review your obligations. You mentioned that you have "so many other obligations." Study your list and find an expense you can cut down. For example, if you haven't been going to the gym at least three times a week, then you may be better off canceling your gym membership. The savings you will get from canceling the monthly dues can be channeled to your emergency fund. You can find another exercise alternative that won't cost you money, such as walking in the park.

3. Before spending anything for the month, save first. Once you get your paycheck, set aside some money for your emergency fund. Start with at least 10 percent, and increase it as you free up more obligations. Making saving a priority will be beneficial for your financial future.

4. Open a separate account for your emergency fund. This will help you to avoid dipping into your emergency fund for living expenses.

5. If you have a sideline income or receive a windfall (example: bonus or prize money from a contest), use this to pay off your debts, then put the rest in your emergency fund.

6. Cut down on expenses that you can do without. These may include weekly trips to an expensive coffee shop, or going for designer clothes. Just think: if your family is in need or has an emergency, you wouldn't even think of these things. But you will rack your brains thinking of how to meet the family emergency with your meager funds. Thus, prioritize the emergency fund.

When you have enough funds in your bank account, move your emergency fund to a higher-yielding form of investment, such as a time deposit, money market placement or even bonds and stocks.

According to the book The Citibank Guide to Building Personal Wealth, "Moving your surplus cash into other investments does not necessarily mean that you won't have access to it in a real emergency. Bonds, equities, and mutual funds can normally be sold very quickly."

By moving your cash to a higher-yielding investment, you may protect your fund from the effects of inflation. Before investing, please be aware of the potential benefits and risks of higher-yielding investments.

The emergency fund is so called because you will only turn to this when real life emergencies happen, such as when you lose your job, or get really sick, or when tragedy strikes in the family. Make this your immediate financial goal this year.

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Maharlika – Opinyon

EDITORIAL

Crisis of truth

The pastoral statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, issued Tuesday, takes a few small steps forward and one large step back. No wonder the public is confused. What, in fact, are the bishops saying?

Let's begin with the obvious. The bishops, meeting in an emergency plenary session, did not call on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to resign. But whoever expected the bishops to make such an appeal is either a political innocent or an incompetent strategist. Even bishops who are politically active against the Arroyo administration had told their friends in the media beforehand that a resignation call was not—and could not have been—in the cards. Politics, even of the episcopal variety, is the art of the possible.

Short of that unrealistic expectation, however, the much-anticipated statement still managed to disappoint.

Don't get us wrong. The statement is a calm and reasoned argument for greater public accountability. It makes several telling points, both in its introductory passages and in its specific recommendations.

It acknowledges that the entire country faces "a crisis of truth and the pervading cancer of corruption." This is a significant departure, or rather development, from the CBCP pastoral statement only last month, when the bishops took pains to distinguish the concerns of Metro Manila from those of the provinces. We are all, indeed, in the throes of a crisis of truth.

In recognizing that "the search for truth in the midst of charges and allegations must be determined and relentless," the statement also accepts—even if it does not endorse—that what is in question in this crisis is the "moral ascendancy of the present government." We may have different answers, but we are all, indeed, weighing not the political or economic but the very moral viability of the Arroyo administration.

The Feb. 26 statement also calls on the President to strike Executive Order 464 off the books. Some analysts, not all of them partial to the opposition, think this appeal is redundant or downright useless. The Supreme Court in 2006 famously invalidated two provisions in the EO that could be construed as gag orders. But there's the rub. The administration and its allies continue to invoke EO 464, or at least their interpretation of the Court's ruling. In other words, the order, which widened the scope of executive privilege to include even rank-and-file soldiers, continues to have its political uses. Thus, we can only agree: To encourage "those who might have knowledge of any corruption in branches of government" to join the search for truth, EO 464 must be lifted.

The pastoral statement also called on both the Senate and the Office of the Ombudsman to "use their distinct and different powers of inquiry" to discover the truth, "not for their own interests but for the common good." We read the bishops' recommendation as an appeal for fairness. (So with the recommendation that the media serve as a "positive resource.") We agree: The truth is ill-served by a partial or partisan process.

So much to agree with, and much to reflect on. But why is the statement ultimately disappointing? Not because it seeks to redefine People Power as communal action at the grassroots level (the bishops are actually on to something), but because it asks the leader whose moral ascendancy is in question to "take the lead" in forging an answer.

This seems to us to privilege hierarchy—or what in theology is called the state of grace of a person in high position—over the "determined and relentless" search for truth. If a bishop were confronted with persistent allegations of wrongdoing, would the Pope ask him to take the lead in resolving the allegations against his own person? In such an event, process becomes more important than position.

We realize that, in itself, the language of the recommendation ("Urge the President and all the branches of government to take the lead in combating corruption wherever it is found") seems to be neutral. But in the present context, it actually disregards a fundamental reality. In the scandal over the National Broadband Network, the President and her men have been less than forthright in telling the truth. That, in fact, is one of the reasons we have a crisis in the first place.

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A day in Metro Cebu

By JAIME VERGARA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

The trip to Cebu (originally known as Zubu, now also, Sugbu) would have been unnecessary had Metro Manila's Makati Medical Center was more patient-friendly. Aetna manages our PSS health insurance and I was instructed to bring my MD referral for an MRI to Makati Medical. (Finance wizard Eloy Inos on the plane out of Saipan revealed that our own CHC is in the process of securing our MRI equipment so we won't have to go off-island for the service in the future). A call to MMC's admissions, however, shunted my call to Billing. Allegedly, Aetna had exhausted its credit line for outpatient service from the CNMI, though in-patient services were welcomed provided one deposited enough to cover co-payment.

Given Cebu Doctors' University Hospital as my alternative option, and having resided in Metro Cebu almost two decades before, I thought a trip to the Queen City of the South was good for my psychic health.

Mactan-Cebu International Airport is a far cry from the remembered administration of the late Marcos Martial Law days. Evidently, practices around the airport have become democratized. Compliant taxis line up and porters wait to be called for service; there is an element of voluntary group discipline that was missing before.

I flew in on Cebu Pacific Air whose operations got its inspiration from Southwest Airlines' no frills, low cost service, initiated by a former retired PAL executive. CP has been giving PAL a run for its money ever since. Seats are sold on a first come, first low-fare-offered basis, with a publicized intent to get every Juan and Juana de la Cruz flying somewhere in the archipelago sometime at least once in their lifetime. It is working.

I visited Mactan 35 years ago as an Ilocandia lad, and I remember it as a very laid back sleepy fishing village unaffected by the glamour of urban Cebu. It is accomplished in turning its jackfruit tree trunks into polished guitars, and provided many young boys and girls' shell collection with its supply of golden cowries. Fifteen years later, I and a few change catalysts descended on one of the villages to promote a local asset-based people-friendly community development project. One of the by-products in that endeavor is the Mactan stone, which remains a preferred façade material in many low buildings in the Philippines. Some even made it to Saipan on structures constructed in the late 80s. I left Metro Cebu 20 years ago full of memories of simple lives and instantaneous celebrations.

No longer. The island still called Opon is anything but simple, if it really ever was. The Sudtonggan village stone source of my younger days (situated on the airplane approach of the airport) have become pockets of developed real estate for middle class housing, albeit, of dubious water and sewage support systems. These are surrounded by a sea of newly migrated rural dwellers in shanty dwellings drawn by the allure of the city and driven by its 7/24 declaration of bottomless hope and endless possibilities. Remnants of the old village dwellers that remained when the willing and able moved elsewhere now compete with the assertive and aggressive newcomers staff the cubicles of international call centers, light industries and IT-based manufacturing concerns. Mayor Tomas and his archaic encomienda swagger not withstanding, Cebu's promise is real, yet its illusions are without end, and its delusions sadly abounding much more!

The Sinulog dancing festival ethos, reminiscent of west African beats, has become highly commercialized, with ladies hawking candles at the Basilica of the Sto. Nino lending their praying skills for a fee. The lazy lounging and bathing in the sun on the seashell strewn shores from Punta Engaño of Opon to Cordova town, has been replaced by sun lotioned Aussies, delicately cosmeticized Japanese and members of the scented transnational glitterati. Tonggo beach in Marigondon, once the local's beach playground has sadly become a blighted sight with its waters mingled with the new neighbors' water runoff effluents.

Yet, the city's promise is evident in such groups as the Soil and Water Conservation Foundation, Inc., which 20 years ago attempted to demonstrate with newly graduated Aggies how to engage watershed communities in managing natural resources in three Cebu and Negros islands' locations. Engaging the assets and enthusiasm of local and international development bodies including civic groups such as the Rotary Clubs, coupled to passionate dedication of the newly endowed ecologically conscious youth, the Foundation's projects and programs have since been replicated through influenced and impacted entities. New industrial plants and development programs have manifestly become earth-friendly, even if it is only in their public relations' brochure. The SWCF led by an ex-Bohol PCV with his Pinay wife quietly yet firmly labor to forward the cause of the Earth's charter!

From the fourth floor of Perpetual Succor Hospital, one can see the challenge of the urban sprawl even as a new swath of a transcentral highway mars the scenic side of the island's mountain ridge, built to accommodate palatial gated homes in the scenic and elevated places. In the slope inclining into the wharf that makes most of Cebu City, the maze of corrugated tin roofed buildings lay in the shadows of tall imposing structures surrounding such new creations as the Ayala Mall and its spanking business center in the old Lahug neighborhood.

An old traded commodity, which had always flourished in the city's colorful history, is the commerce of pulchritude. Any knowledgeable taxi driver would direct the inquisitive to Junquera in downtown Cebu where barber shops and hair salons are entry points to additional services of the flesh, direct and without frills, nor apologies. Quality product improves along Mango Avenue where the apprenticeship of many who would find themselves later as karaoke bar Japayukis/Japanukis in the Yakuza-run low-light rooms of Tokyo and Yokohama are tasted and tested. The currency charge increases as lap dances are moved into secluded rooms and hidden cubicles whose existence are not a matter of public record. The erogenous zone is alive and rentable in Metro Cebu!

Banilad across the Mandaue line offer additional product refinement. There are casas that market young collegialas from nice houses willing to provide escort service to businessmen needing company for dinner, or playmates to the pampered unpolished young men of the affording rich and the hygienically washed but still unfamous. From the vengeful mestizas whose honor has been violated as target practice by scions of the high and the mighty, to the struggling but ambitious college lass whose tastes and lifestyle exceeds her Mama's support capabilities, to the guilt-ridden religious whose passion for material wealth and social success has led them to dependence on the commerce of the forbidden fruit—all these are for anyone's taking for the right price.

We're just talking about the girls. The boys, particularly the young ones, with their guardians of Anglos, Teutons, Gaelics, Latins and numerous other Euro-origins, require another lengthy telling, but has also become a fixture in the erogenic tableau of the region.

All in all, the marriage of the culture of poverty, debilitating and humiliating; the pleasures of sensual tropical earthiness, sweetest when condemned; and the widely practiced concubinage *querida* system of no. 2-and-some families, make the trading in the pleasures of the flesh a widely practiced and socially tolerated phenomenon, nationally but more casually and intentionally in Metro Cebu.

At an international airline's office in one of the business centers we found a Filipino couple, Korean and Japanese tourists, and eight couples of fair Cebuana lugging male denizens of varying Indo-Aryan pedigree ages 50 and above. The ladies properly coiffed and exquisitely painted, ever the consumers to the various spas and remedies for ever looking good and feeling young, which predominates the city landscape, had partners in tow miserably looking like a ragtag of senior citizens whose sartorial tastes and grooming habits were modeled after Pacific beachcombers of the 60s.

Cebu excels in the business of looking good. Of course, in a culture that values what others think, looking good takes the quality of a personal crusade. Happily, the physical care to personal space extends to home and neighborhood sites, but sadly, save one—the ubiquitous urban blight of graffiti art seems to have descended on Metro Cebu's walls with a vengeance.

A young man from Sudtonggan 30 years ago wanted to finish high school; enabled to attend the high school at the Air Base, he would be the first in the village to graduate. He did not stop. Perseverance drove him further to become a CPA; in April, he will know if he qualifies to join the ranks of the *abogados de campanillas* (hopefully, sans attitude!). Even in the midst of dire deprivation, the triumph of the human spirit prevails.

A young farm girl up the foothills of Compostela today wants to be a teacher. Heir to three generations of tenant farming, she is locked into a lifestyle of hand-to-mouth subsistence living. She dropped out of fist year College for scarcity of support. For a $100 a month, she is the proverbial horse who may be brought to the river. She is hot to trot, ready to drink; she aims to learn. I say, "Why not?" The spirit is willing. I aim to push, again. One *maestra* coming up!

Maharlika – Samu't Sari

BIRTHDAY BASH

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Birthday celebrant Helen makes a wish before blowing the candles during the birthday party.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Helen Olbes poses with Eric Abragan with wife Sharon and son Joshua during the birthday bash at Green Flash restaurant on Beach Road Wednesday.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

James and Helen strike a pose during the birthday bash.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Helen with Big Beats band's Floyd and Fat Joy Slim Band's James, Patz, Joel and Joy.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Birthday celebrants Helen Olbez and Manny Sitchon enjoy the moment with close friends.

February birthday celebrants and friends gather for a photo during the celebration.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

February birthday celebrants Helen Olbes, Nora Dela Cruz, Marie Babauta, Manny Sitchon of Island Business Systems and Supplies and Fat Joy Slim's Patrick Bautista gather for a photo.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Youngstyle

Leap-day birthday kids enjoy brief celebrity

By AMY ORNDORFF
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WASHINGTON—Daijah Higgs, of Springfield, Va., either turned 2 yesterday or 8, depending on how you count.

Feb. 29 was Leap Day, an event that comes along once every four years, with rare exceptions. Daijah and other kids born on Feb. 29, 2000, have celebrated their actual birthday only once since then, in 2004.

Daijah says she feels "special" to have been born on a day that rarely shows up on the calendar. Her family makes sure to do something really different when it's her actual birthday. In 2004 they went to Disney World; this year she was given a puppy (as an early gift).

The downside of being born on Feb. 29 is that people aren't sure when to wish you a happy birthday. And sometimes, when it's not on the calendar, they forget altogether.

Most years have 365 days, 28 of them in February. Some years, called leap years, have an extra day in February to make up for the fact that it takes Earth a little longer than 365 days to complete one orbit of the sun. Adding a 29th day to February uses up that extra time.

Having one's real birthday come around once every four years means that kids born on Feb. 29 get to choose another time as a substitute birthday.

LEAP YEAR FACT
The chances of being born on Feb. 29 are 1 in 1,461.
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Sydney Jones, of Vienna, Va., celebrates on Feb. 28 most years because she "wanted it to be in the same month" she was born in. Annie Crosson, of Fairfax Station, Va., prefers Feb. 28, too, but for a different reason: It's her great-grandmother's birthday.

At school, Annie is never sure when or if her birthday will be mentioned. "Sometimes they announce it on February 28 and sometimes on March 1, so I never know when they are going to say my name," she says. Last year, it wasn't announced it at all.

That shouldn't happen Friday, since Feb. 29 has its own spot on the calendar. Oh, and if you see Daijah, Sydney or Annie, be sure to wish them a happy birthday. You won't get to for another four years.

Feb. 29 was Leap Day, an event that comes along once every four years. Virginia girls Daijah Higgs, left, Annie Crosson (with her pony Sundance) and Sydney Jones were born on Feb. 29, 2000, so they have celebrated their actual birthday only once, in 2004.
THE WASHINGTON POST

Do the math

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How long it takes Earth to go around the sun: 365.2419 days
Calendar year: 365 days
Left over: 0.2419 days (about 6 hours per day)
That adds up to about 1 extra day every four years.
Without any adjustment, the calendar would be more than 24 days ahead of the seasons every 100 years. (Eventually the United States would have winter in July!) By adding a day in leap years, the calendar year and seasons stay in sync.

The General Rule

With one exception, years that can be evenly divided by four are leap years. For example: 2008 divided by 4 equals 502. Thus, 2008 is a leap year.

The Exception

The final year of a century is not a leap year unless it can be evenly divided by 400. For example: 2100 divided by 400 equals 5.25. Thus, 2100 is not a leap year.

Source: National Maritime Museum, England

Worth the wait

Once-every-four-years fun:

- Boston Market dished out free lunches Friday to anyone born on Leap Day.
- A Leap Day birthday gets you a free one-topping pizza at Papa John's. Order online at www.papajohns.com and bring an ID when you go for pickup. There also are specials for pizza lovers who aren't having a birthday.
- California Tortilla has a free burrito for birthday kids. For everyone else: Leap, shimmy or shake while ordering your meal and the cashier will toss in a free side dish of tortilla chips and queso.
- McDonald's offered all customers a free McSkillet breakfast burrito Friday with the purchase of a medium or large beverage. ***(© 2008, The Washington Post)***

A look at the Negro Leagues

By MARYLOU TOUSIGNANT
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Author and artist Kadir Nelson spent more than seven years researching, writing and illustrating this book. His effort shows on each page.

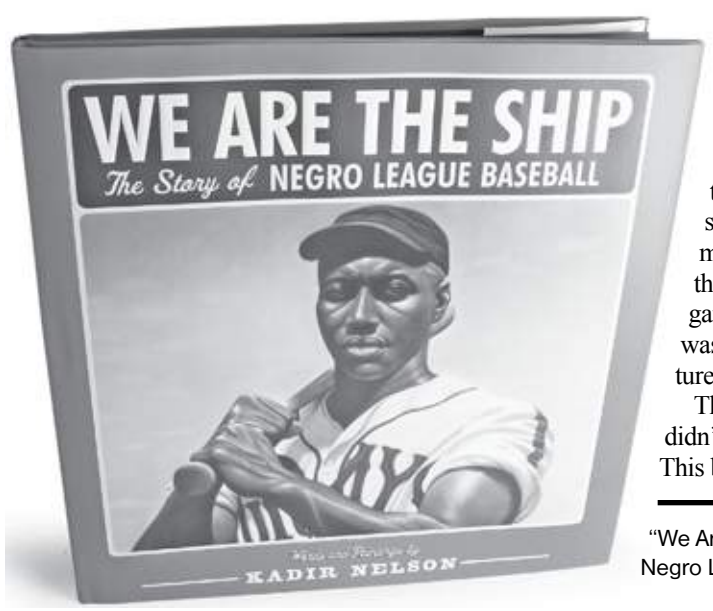
African-Americans have "been playing baseball for a mighty long time," he writes in a folksy, first-person style that easily transports the reader back through time. You'll feel as if you are in the dugout with Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson and a host of players you've never heard of.

They come alive, too, in Nelson's colorful illustrations. There's a new one with each flip of the page. "Powerful paintings," Hall-of-Famer Henry Aaron calls them.

The story is powerful as well. The title comes from Andrew "Rube" Foster, who founded the Negro National League in 1920. "We are the ship; all else the sea," he said, meaning that the new league would set its own course.

It had to, because many whites were not ready to accept Negroes, as they were then known, as equals. Players traveled by bus (often without being able to clean up after a game) and might ride hundreds of miles without a meal or a bed because restaurants and motels wouldn't serve them. They were paid much less than whites, and they sometimes arrived for a game only to find that the field was little more than a cow pasture.

They loved the game, which didn't always love them back. This book helps make up for that.



"We Are the Ship" takes a look at the Negro Leagues.
THE WASHINGTON POST

Montana 4th-grader thinks up new planet memory jogger

By MARYLOU TOUSIGNANT
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WASHINGTON—More than 800 people entered National Geographic's contest to come up with a new phrase to help people remember the order of the planets. A new device was needed because Pluto has been reclassified as a dwarf planet, and Ceres and Eris (two other dwarf planets) have been added to the list.

The winner of the contest is 10-year-old Maryn Smith of Great Falls, Mont.

Maryn told KidsPost that it took her and her mom about 10 minutes—that's less than one minute per planet!—to think up the winning entry: My Very Exciting Magic Carpet Just Sailed Under Nine Palace Elephants.

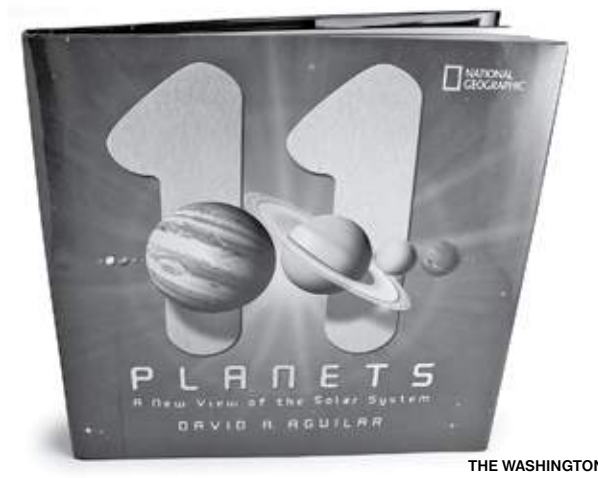
The first letters of the 11 words represent, in order of their distance from the sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Ceres, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto and Eris.

Maryn said the first five words came to her fairly fast, "and the rest of it just went along with the Aladdin theme."

The other fourth-graders at Riverview Elementary voted Maryn's entry best in their class, and her teacher sent it in to the contest. When the principal announced over the loudspeaker that Maryn had won, "I was sort of embarrassed," she said. But she's getting used to the attention.

Maryn's name and winning entry appear in the National Geographic book "11 Planets: A New View of the Solar System," by David A. Aguilar. And singer Lisa Loeb is recording a song using the new memory device.

Plus, kids all over the country will now learn the order of the planets by repeating Maryn's Vastly Entertaining Memory Catchphrase.



THE WASHINGTON POST
Maryn Smith, of Great Falls, Mont., won a contest to come up with a new phrase to help people remember the order of the planets. Her winning entry will appear in the National Geographic book "11 Planets: A New View of the Solar System," by David A. Aguilar.

Kids talk with Kathleen Herles, the voice of Dora

By KIDSDAY STAFF REPORTERS
(C) 2008, NEWSDAY

We spoke with Kathleen Herles, who does the voice of Dora the Explorer.

She was born in 1991 and lives on Long Island.

Question: How did you get the job?

Answer: When I was around 4, I did modeling, and through that I got a manager who started sending me on auditions, and I got the part of Dora.

Q: You've been doing the voice of Dora for about 7 years. Have you had to change your voice as you've gotten older? Do you still enjoy being Dora now that you're a teenager?

A: I had to make it a lot higher (as I got older), but it's not hard at all. I love doing it -- all the people I work with and everything. It's great!

Kathleen Herles does the voice of Dora.

Q: Besides Dora, who's your favorite character on the show?

A: Boots, because he's like my best friend, and he's just so crazy and funny.

Q: Do you have a favorite episode on the show?

A: I have more than one favorite, but I really liked the "Dora's Fairytale Adventure." It's kind of like a musical, and it was so much fun recording all the songs.

Q: Do kids treat you differently because you do the voice of a famous cartoon character?

A: When I first moved (to Long Island), everyone got so excited. I was only in sixth grade. A lot of kids asked me a lot of questions about (my job). But for the most part, now that I'm older, no one treats me differently.

Q: Do you ever get asked to speak in Dora's voice?

A: Yes, I do. A lot!

Q: What is the hardest part about being the voice of a cartoon character?

A: It's actually fun, because when you mess up, no one except yourself and the director actually sees it. You have to put a lot more energy behind the mike because the audience doesn't see your facial expressions, so that's a little harder.

Q: You speak in Spanish and English. Which do you prefer to speak in?

A: English, because that's my first language.

Q: Do you collect Dora items?

A: Yes, I do. Every time I go into a store, I want to buy all the Dora items, especially the Dora dollhouses.

...and with singer Natasha Bedingfield

By KIDSDAY STAFF REPORTERS
© 2008, NEWSDAY

We recently got to see and listen to Natasha Bedingfield's sound check at the Hard Rock Cafe in Manhattan. She was warming up for her performance that night, a benefit for the charitable organization Global Angels, founded by Natasha's mom, Molly Bedingfield. It was very exciting and interesting.

We went into a back room stage area where the Hard Rock has its concerts and got to sit in an audience of very few people (technicians and publicists) and got to see Natasha practice a few tunes. We heard "Unwritten," her most popular song by far, and "In the Backyard."

We happened to see Sean Kingston listening in, too. He sings a duet with her, a great song called "Love Like This." It was really something special to get an inside look at what the audience doesn't get to see.

We were very happy to have such a great opportunity and would love to do it again.

Before the soundcheck, we interviewed Natasha at the Alex Hotel. You can read the entire interview at Newsday.com/kidsday.

Natasha Bedingfield supports the charitable organization Global Angels, founded by Natasha's mom, Molly Bedingfield.

Question: When did you first become interested in children's charities?

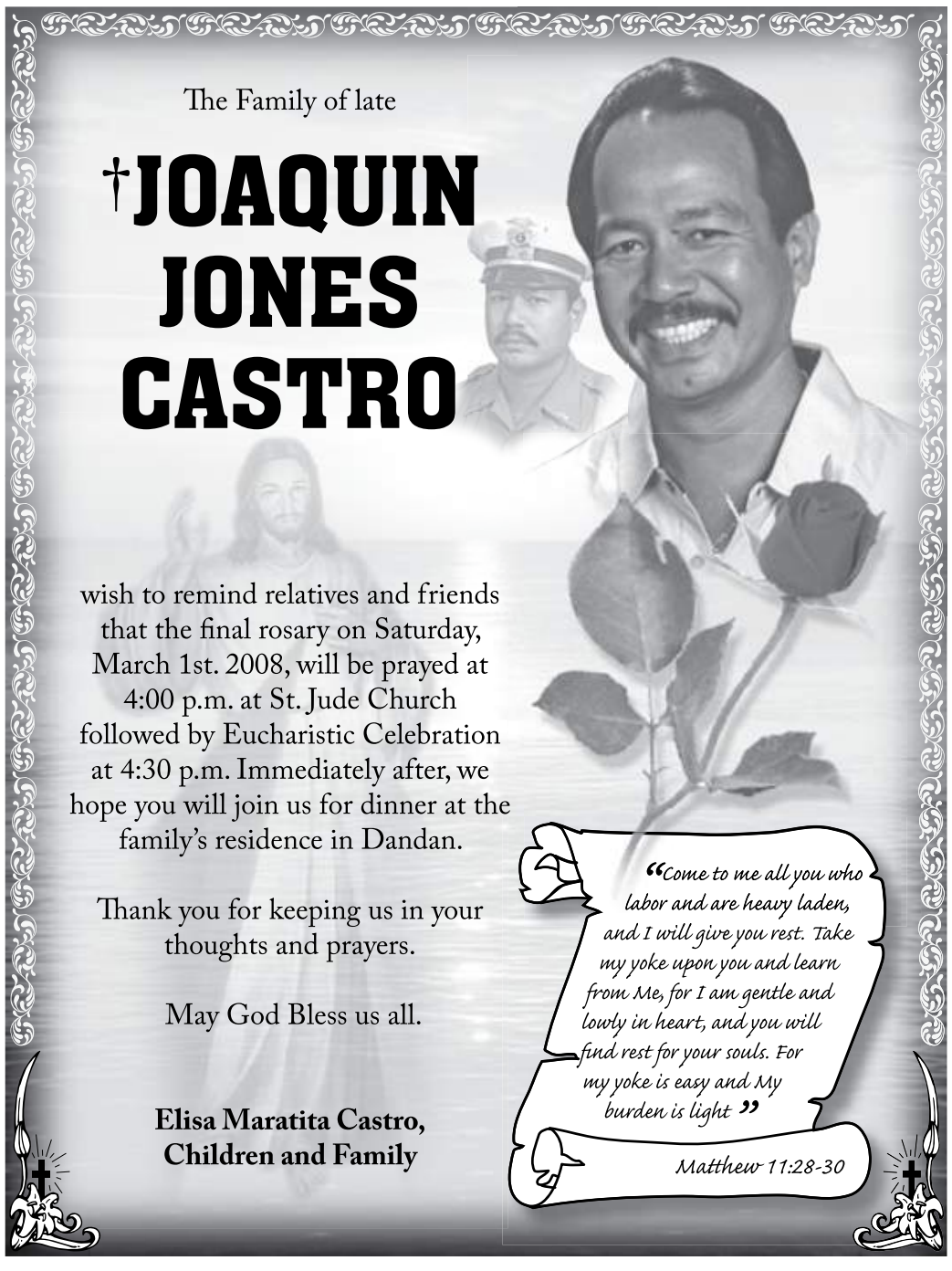
Answer: Probably about three years ago. Specifically, when my mom started this charity.

Q: When did you realize that world hunger was a major problem?

A: I think that even when I was in school, there were big images on TV of starving children, specifically in Africa. I learned about this when I was young. At that point, I didn't really know what I could do to help.

Q: Is there any way kids can get involved?

A: There are lots of ways for kids to raise money. I haven't been in school for a while, but the cool thing about Global Angels is finding creative ways to make money. I always remember a certain time in my life feeling hopeless, and I see a problem, and I think what can I do. I am just one person; I don't have much money. Especially if you a kid, you are just one kid, and there are so many rules that one has to follow. But that is the amazing thing, and one kid can make a difference.



Kids answer kids' problems

By KIDSDAY STAFF REPORTERS
(C) 2008, NEWSDAY

Dear Kidsday: I am a 9-year-old boy. There are kids in my class who are all in a group. I am not part of the group, and sometimes they make fun of me. I want to be friends with them, but I don't like them being mean. —Left Out

Dear Left Out: We're sure all the kids aren't mean. If you can, find a time when one or two of them are alone and try to be friends with them. Find out if you have things in common. It may take a while, but you might be able to win them over. If that doesn't work, find other kids in the class you are friendly with and have things in common with. We would say don't worry about the teasing, but that is impossible. If it gets really bad, talk to your teacher or parents about it.

■ ■ ■

Dear Kidsday: I am 11, and I play on a football team. My friend says I stink, but my coach says I am the best person on the defensive line. My friend thinks he is all that, but he isn't. What should I do? —Jordan

Dear Jordan: Even though football season is now over, you are going to run into kids like this all the time. We think you should listen to your coach and not someone who is only interested in himself. So, ignore him! We think he might be jealous of you, so he is putting you down. For every sport you play, practice as much as you can to be the best.

■ ■ ■

Dear Kidsday: My friend and I like each other as more than just friends. I told him that I had a crush on him, and he said he liked me, too. He also told me he likes someone else. What do I do? —Tinkerbell

Dear Tinkerbell: We were divided on this problem. Some kids on the panel think you should make him choose you or the other girl. Other kids think you should just be friends and see how things develop. Besides, the other girl may not even like him.

Got a problem? Send your problem letters to: Dear Kidsday, Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Road, Melville, NY 11747-4250, or e-mail kidsday@newsday.com.

Help protect our national parks

Ready, set, write.

The Junior Ranger Essay Contest, for kids ages 9 to 12, poses this question: "What can you do now to turn over a new leaf for the environment and help preserve our national parks?"

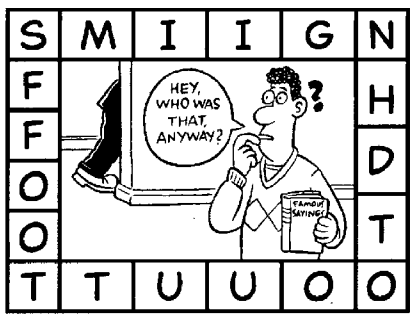
If your essay is the grand-prize winner, you'll travel with your family to the Florida Everglades on Earth Day in April and star in an electronic field trip—a virtual outing that will be shown in schools nationwide—examining native and exotic plants in our national parks.

Essays should be no more than 500 words. The entry deadline is March 14. Essays can be submitted online at www.nationalparks.org/get-involved/essay-contest.

For more information: www.nationalparks.org (look under "What's New at NPF" in the far-left column) or 202-354-6480. ***(© 2008, The Washington Post)***

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



HIDDEN in the above frame is a famous proverb. You can find it by reading every other letter as you go around it clockwise. The trick is finding the right first letter.

Answer: Starting with the "O" in the lower right-hand corner: "Out of sight, out of mind."

THE PYRAMID OF WORD POWER!

Starting with the word MACINTOSH at the bottom of our word pyramid, try dropping one letter at a time as you work your way up, so that the remaining letters at each level spell out a new word. The following hints are from the bottom up:

1. A raincoat (MACINTOSH).
2. "The Last of the _____."
3. A soft polishing cloth.
4. Coffee/chocolate drinks.
5. A state of great confusion.
6. Money, coins and currency.
7. Type of tree.
8. Expression of surprise.
9. Highest in rank.

Answers: (From the bottom up) Macintosh, Mohicans, chamois, mochas, chaos, cash, ash, ha,a.

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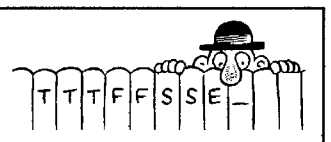
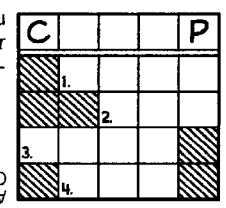
WHAT COMES NEXT? Someone has written a series of letters on this fence. What letter comes next in the sequence?



Answer: The letter "N," which stands for the first letter in "Ninety." The other letters stand for ten, twenty, thirty, etc.

FIND-A-WORD! On the top line is our mystery word. You need to fill in the missing letters. Clue words (smaller words contained in letter-by-letter order within the mystery word) are defined below.

1. A vessel containing oil. 2. Found at rock concerts.
3. Found in the ocean. 4. (slang) When crooks run.



Answers: 1. Lamp, 2. Amp (amplifier), 3. Clam, 4. Lam. Mystery word: Clamp (used to grip objects).

Illustrated by David Coulson

Cat training?

Q: You recently ran a series on basic training for dogs. Is there such a thing as basic training for cats? Is it even possible to train a cat? —Bart T., Clute, Texas

A: Well, anything's possible, even training a cat. Actually, cats can be trained, although the approach must be somewhat different and their reaction to your training will be completely different from the way a dog reacts to training.

Cats are fairly independent animals, but they take many actions on instinct, and it is this instinct you have to channel in order to train them. For example, cats tend to eliminate and bury their waste in sand or loose dirt, and in a private spot, and this is the first and most common training element that owners introduce. That's right—showing your cat where the litter box is and placing it in the box so that it notices the loose clay is one step in basic training.

Like dogs, cats respond to positive stimuli, including healthy treats, petting and praise. They also learn to recognize negative signs: For example, hissing at a cat is a common way to tell it "Don't do that!"—although it will probably perceive this as the more dominant family member telling it to take a hike.

Paw's corner by Sam Mazzotta

Observe your cat closely to see how it instinctively acts during the day—playing, hunting, resting or getting into trouble. You can develop a training program tailored to the individual way that your cat acts and reacts. Don't expect it to roll over on command and jump through hoops—though there are some cats that can do that—but getting your cat to use the litter box, stay off the counter and come when called are pretty useful basic skills.

■ ■ ■

Send your tips, questions and comments to Paws Corner, c/o King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or e-mail them to pawscorner@hotmail.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By SAMANTHA WEAVER

■ Those who study such things say that baboons can only throw underhanded, never overhand.

■ It was British playwright Oscar Wilde who made the following sage observation: "Only the shallow know themselves."

■ Baseball is the national pastime, and even those you might not immediately think of as sports fans can get caught up in the excitement. Take composers, for instance—they're generally thought of as a rather stuffy lot, right? Well famed composer John Philip Sousa was an avid fan. In fact, at the request of Judge Kenesaw Mountain, major-league baseball's first high commissioner, Sousa composed the march "The National Game" in 1925.

■ Are you a turophile? I certainly am! "Turophile" is just a fancy way of saying "cheese-lover."

■ Weddings are universal. In all countries and cultures, all over the world, there is a ritual of joining people together in a lifelong bond. Of course, they don't always do it in exactly the same way. In India, for instance, as a part of the Hindu marriage ceremony the parents of the bride wash the bride and groom's feet with milk and water. Seems like an odd way to start out a relationship with your new son-in-law.

■ Most people are aware of the fact that scorpions have eight legs, but you probably didn't realize that they also have eight eyes.

■ Those who study such things say that India was once an island. It was some years ago, of course—about 50 million years ago.

■ ■ ■

Thought for the Day: "The main dangers in this life are the people who want to change everything—or nothing." —Nancy Astor

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MAGIC MAZE ● REDUPLICATIVE WORDS

F H E C A X E O T C A T C I T
V T R P N L J E H F D B Y X Y
V T R P O M Y O K P O T P I T
I G M U M B O J U M B O A E F
D B Z X E H W U U W H T R T I
R Q O Y C E N D A C L J P I F
I G B O E F M S P D C A I B Y
Y X O G W U E O V T S R R D T
P H E O D E H O N L K J I I F
C E G G S C Y T T I B Y T T I
G A Z G I Z G N I D G N I W F

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

Bye-bye	Fifty-fifty	Mumbo-jumbo	Tip-top
Choo-choo	Gee-gee	Riprap	Wingding
Chop-chop	Go-go	See-saw	Zig-zag
Dum-dum	Itty-bitty	Tidbit	

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

DIFFICULTY: ★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

	+		÷		8
−		÷		x	
	÷		+		7
+		+		−	
	+		÷		1
2		11		1	

1 2 3 5 6 7 8 9 9

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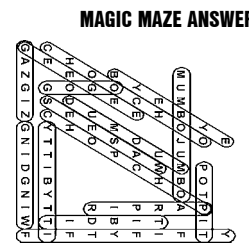
MAGIC MAZE ANSWER



REDUPLICATIVE WORDS

GO FIGURE ANSWER

7	+	9	÷	2	8
−		÷		x	
6	÷	3	+	5	7
+		+		−	
1	+	8	÷	9	1
2		11		1	

Cha-cha-cha doormat keeps out the mud

Donna's Day Creative family fun by Donna Erickson

Dance away mud, grit and grime from your shoes and boots with a whimsical doormat. Your family can paint it together, and then use it every time you walk through the door during this wet and muddy season.

So, why is it so much fun? The design is actually a set of four painted footprints arranged in such a way that your kids can follow them to do basic "cha-cha-cha" dance steps. Once they get the hang of the moves, you won't have to nag them the next time they walk through the door. Instead of asking "Did you wipe your feet?" for the umpteenth time, simply ask, "Did you do the cha-cha-cha?"

Here's the stuff you'll need to make your own cha-cha-cha doormat in three easy steps:

■ 1 sturdy, plain-colored fiber doormat or large carpet sample
■ A sheet of newspaper
■ Marker
■ Scissors
■ Acrylic paint in two colors
■ Sponge brush

Here's the fun:

Draw a pattern of a shoe shape on a sheet of newspaper. (I used an old iron that doesn't work anymore as a clever pattern.) Cut out the paper shape. Make four.

Tape the patterns onto the doormat in a "cha-cha-cha" step pattern. Two patterns should be next to each other at the top half of the doormat and the other two directly underneath.

Outline each shape with a marker, remove the patterns and fill in the outline with paint. Also paint connecting dots between the two sets of shoe shapes. Let dry. Set it at your front or back door.

Teach your kids the basic "cha-cha-cha" steps and practice using the "footprints" as a guide. This might be a good time to ask a grandparent, aunt or uncle to step in and share his or her dancing skills with the kids. Who knows? Your child might be just baby steps away from "Dancing With the Stars"—and your floors will stay relatively clean to boot!

Extra tip: If your kids have plain, solid-color rubber rain boots, personalize and brighten them with a few dabs of paint. Apply acrylic paint in squeeze bottles directly on the outside of clean, dry boots to make designs and patterns.

■ ■ ■

Donna Erickson's award-winning television series "Donna's Day" airs on public television nationwide. Visit www.donnasday.com to find out when it airs on your local PBS station and to sign up for Donna's e-newsletter.

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Life & Style

‘American Idol’ cuts 4 more

NEW YORK (AP)—Four more aspiring singers failed to convince viewers that they have what it takes to win the star-making talent contest “American Idol.”

The voting public cut loose Alaina Whitaker, Jason Yeager, Robbie Carrico and Alexandrea Lushington, trimming the number of contestants to 16 Thursday night.

Whitaker, a 16-year-old from Tulsa, Okla., let out a sob after she heard the result.

“Sorry, this is so embarrassing,” she told host Ryan Seacrest, who consoled her with a hug.

The other “Idol” female contestants gathered on stage to lend moral support to Whitaker as she gave a final performance of “Hopelessly Devoted to You.” Several contestants wiped away tears.

“You are a gifted, bright young talent. ... This is the start of an amazing career from you,” said judge Paula Abdul, who gave Whitaker a standing ovation.

AP

American Idol Season 7’s Top 24 contestants pose as they arrive at a party in their honor, Thursday, Feb. 14, 2008, in Los Angeles.

Simon Cowell wasn’t surprised by Yeager’s exit.

“Your problem—quite simply—is that you don’t stand out in the crowd at the moment,” the cranky judge told Yeager, a 28-year-old single dad from Grand Prairie, Texas.

Cowell told Carrico, who sang Foreigner’s “Hot Blooded,” that his rocker act “just never ever felt real.” Carrico, 26, from Melbourne, Fla., was part of the pop group Boyz N Girlz United.

Lushington, a 17-year-old Douglasville, Ga., resident (and a snappy dresser and favorite of judge Randy Jackson’s), displayed a lack of confidence Wednesday, acting sheepish and uncomfortable onstage, following her cover of Chicago’s “If You Leave Me Now.” Jackson said the ‘70s song didn’t suit her youthful style.

A standout this week was 17-year-old David Archuleta, who sang a soulful cover of “Imagine.”

Brooke White, 24, also scored a glowing review from Cowell for her bare-bones performance of “You’re So Vain.”

Cowell joked he thought the song was about him.

“American Idol,” now running three times a week, will return to a twice-weekly schedule March 11 for the elimination of the final dozen. The decision-making finale will be held in May.

Oprah’s book pick sells at record pace

NEW YORK (AP)—Even for an Oprah Winfrey book pick, “A New Earth” has been a sensation. About 3.5 million copies of Eckhart Tolle’s spiritual self-help guide have been shipped since Winfrey, host of “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” announced her selection four weeks ago.

The book has topped the best-seller list on Amazon.com virtually from the moment Winfrey’s choice was revealed, and it is the fastest-selling pick ever at Barnes & Noble Inc., according to a statement issued Thursday by Winfrey.

It’s also a record shipment in a four-week span for any book by Penguin Group (USA), which has published such million sellers as Elizabeth Gilbert’s “Eat, Pray, Love” and Ken Follett’s Winfrey-endorsed “The Pillars of the Earth.”

Brian Tart, president and publisher of the Penguin imprint Dutton, told The Associated Press that a key factor was the upcoming Web seminars featuring Winfrey and Tolle, to be held for 10 consecutive Mondays starting March 3.

“Oprah herself has committed 10 weeks to talking to the author, and people from all over the world will be able to participate,” said Tart, who added that more than 500,000 people, from more than 100 countries, have registered for the seminar.

Rowling bashes ‘Harry Potter Lexicon’

NEW YORK (AP)—As the creator of the Harry Potter books sees it, her kindness to fans might come back to haunt her. In papers filed for a lawsuit in Manhattan, J.K. Rowling says she feels betrayed by a fan, Steven Vander Ark, for his role in trying to publish an unauthorized reference work, “Harry Potter Lexicon.”

Ark is editor of a Web site containing a fan-created collection of essays and encyclopedic material on the Potter universe, including lists of spells and potions found in the books, a catalog of magical creatures and a who’s who in the wizarding world.

AP

Author J.K. Rowling listens to a question from the media during a news conference in this Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2006 file photo, in New York.

Rowling said she was especially irked that the site’s owner and the lexicon’s would-be publisher, RDR Books, continued to insist that her acceptance of free, fan-based Web sites justified the efforts.

“I am deeply troubled by the portrayal of my efforts to protect and preserve the copyrights I have been granted in the Harry Potter books,” she wrote in court papers filed Wednesday in a lawsuit she brought against the small Muskegon, Mich., publisher.

She said she intends to publish her own definitive Harry Potter encyclopedia.

“If RDR’s position is accepted, it will undoubtedly have a significant, negative impact on the freedoms enjoyed by genuine fans on the Internet,” she said. “Authors everywhere will be forced to protect their creations much more rigorously, which could mean denying well-meaning fans permission to pursue legitimate creative activities.”

She added: “I find it devastating to contemplate the possibility of such a severe alteration of author-fan relations.”

She brought the lawsuit last Halloween along with film company Warner Bros., which owns the intellectual property related to the Potter books and movies. The lexicon’s publication, previously scheduled for last Nov. 28, has been blocked by the lawsuit.

A telephone message left with RDR Books on Thursday was not immediately returned.

RDR Books publisher Roger Rapoport has said the lexicon is a “critical reference work” and would not compete with any official encyclopedia written by Rowling.

On its Web site, RDR Books said it was “determined to publish this book for the benefit of Harry Potter fans everywhere.”

It said it “believes Ms. Rowling, who has championed the ‘Lexicon’ for years, will love reading the book just as much as she does the Web site on which it is based.”

In the past, Rowling had singled out the Web site and its editor for praise.

Records: Jackson late on home payments

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Public documents show Michael Jackson has repeatedly failed to make mortgage payments on a Los Angeles home that has been used for years by his family.

Documents filed with the Los Angeles County Recorder’s Office indicate the reclusive pop star was most recently in default last month on the property in Encino, an area in the San Fernando Valley.

The singer had $153,910 in missed payments as of Jan. 17 on a $4 million loan serviced by Pasadena-based mortgage lender IndyMac Bancorp. Documents dated Feb. 7 show the notice of default was withdrawn.

Documents also show Jackson previously faced possible default over missed payments on the home in April and August.

A spokeswoman for Jackson did not immediately return a call for comment.

Jackson’s Neverland property in Los Olivos, Calif., is set to be auctioned off March 19 because of missed payments on a $24.5 million loan.

Mom advises teen to trade old friends in for new ones

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DearAbby

DEAR ABBY: I’m 16 and in high school. I would say I have a lot of friends, but very few do I consider real friends. You see, my “friends” like to tease me and call me fat.

Before this all started, I was fine with my appearance and thought I was a normal size. Now I look in the mirror and I’m disgusted with myself. I find myself not eating as much as I used to and thinking negative thoughts. Every time I try to tell them to stop, they make fun of me more.

My mom tells me to make new friends, but I have known them for so long and it’s too hard to make new friends. Please tell me what to do.

—FEELING FAT IN CALI

DEAR FEELING FAT: The people you describe do not sound like “friends” to me. Friends don’t ridicule each other, particularly when they are told it is hurtful.

Although the idea of making new friends may seem daunting, your mother is on the right track. It’s time to involve yourself in activities that do not involve the kids you have been hanging out with—a church group, volunteering, sports, dance classes, even a part-time job. All of these will help you meet new people, and once you do, I’m sure you will find friends. Almost anything would be better than those who are putting you down under the guise of “humor.”

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: You ask your readers to share their pet peeves with you. Well, here’s mine: I cannot overemphasize how annoying it is when people try to send a fax and enter the number of the phone line.

I am an assistant in a busy office. At least three times a week someone will try to send a fax and dial our main office number by mistake. I answer the phones and hear the high-pitched BEEP. Once wouldn’t be that big a deal, but often the sender has walked away from his or her fax machine and it redials again and again. It is annoying and a waste of my time.

Please advise people to first double-check to make sure they have the correct fax number, and second, not to walk away from the machine until they’re certain the fax is going through. This should be common sense, but I see less and less common sense these days. Thanks, Abby.

—FRUSTRATED IN COLORADO

DEAR FRUSTRATED: I’m printing your letter, but there is no guarantee it will resolve your problems. Of course it makes sense to check the number one is calling or faxing, but from what I have observed, people are trying so hard these days to race through their work assignments, that mistakes keep piling up to the point where efficiency suffers. Maybe it’s time to simply slow down and quit multitasking.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: At a business lunch or dinner, if one member at the table bows his or her head to say grace silently, what is the proper thing for the others at the table to do? Join in, wait silently or ignore the behavior?

—CHRISTY IN DENISON, IOWA

DEAR CHRISTY: The polite thing to do would be to wait for the person to finish. You are under no obligation to join in if you prefer not to.

■ ■ ■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

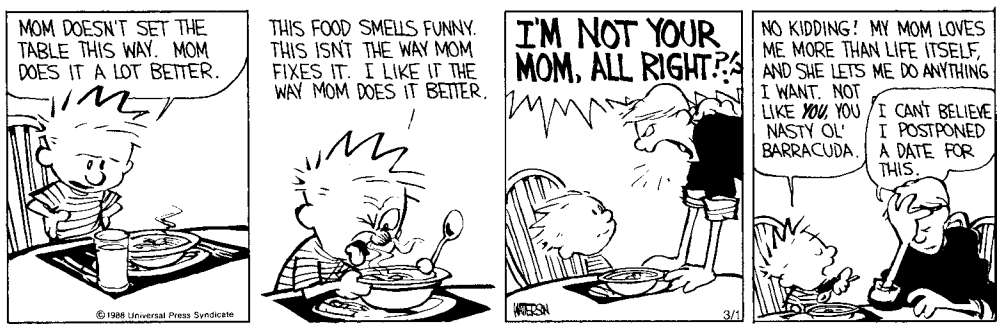
■ ■ ■

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: “Abby’s Favorite Recipes” and “More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby.” Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $12 (U.S. funds)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

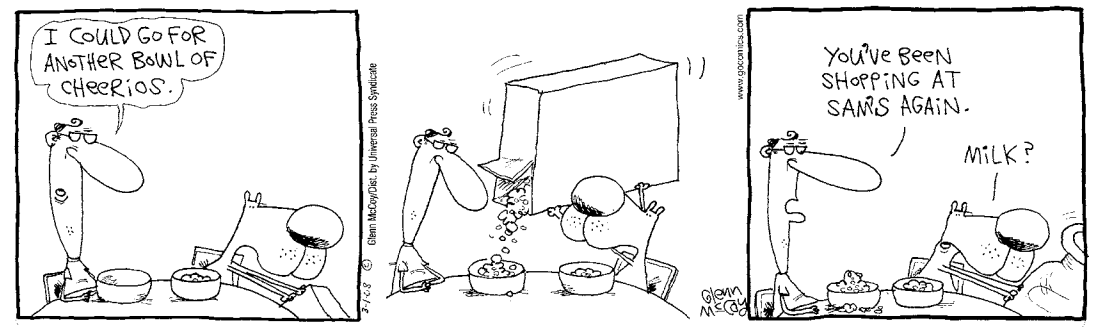
By Jim Davis

Adam@Home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

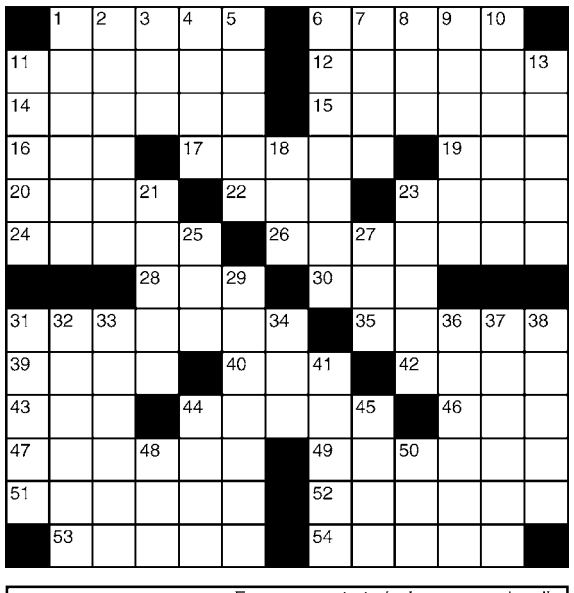
ACROSS
1 Green-skinned fruit
6 Listerine rival
11 Woolly critter
12 Grille material
14 Rug
15 Paul Newman movie
16 Id counter-part
17 Postage
19 Grazing area
20 Ladder compo-nent
22 Schuss
23 Red planet
24 Dull with liquor
26 Unfavor-able
28 Lout
30 One of Rose's sons
31 Paella ingredient
35 Raring to go
39 Speaker of baseball history
40 Edge
42 Folk tales
43 Nay canceler
44 Cren-shaw, e.g.
46 Lanka preceder
47 Chess champ Anatoly
49 Carib-bean sport fish
51 Write in Playfair, e.g.
52 Numbing agents
53 Norton's workplace
54 "Home Improve-ment" array

DOWN
1 Pesti-lence
2 Cooks' protectors
3 Baby food
4 Dead man's hand pair
5 Section of Los Angeles
6 2002 Nicholson title role
7 Fellow
8 Stick figure?
9 Aspen or cotton-wood
10 Eastern bigwigs
11 Sharp
13 Wipe out
18 Alias abbr.
21 Blunders
23 Olym-pian's prize
25 Pitch
27 Skein formation
29 Eternally
31 Tent peg
32 Indo-Euro-peans
33 Inspiring terror
34 Zero
36 Pre-Acts text
37 Baseball stats
38 Jockey's handful
41 Choral composi-tion
44 Fashion
45 Peace-keepers' org.
48 "Wham!"
50 Sigma preceder

Solution time: 27 mins.

F	A	C	T	S		A	M	Y		O	P	T
A	L	O	H	A		C	O	O		C	H	I
D	I	N	A	R		C	O	N	C	E	A	L
		S	T	A	M	E	N		O	A	S	T
A	R	I		H	I	P		A	G	N	E	S
S	I	G	H		S	T	A	G	E			
I	G	N	O	R	E		P	E	N	C	I	L
			P	A	R	K	A		T	O	M	E
M	O	T	I	F		O	R	E		N	A	G
O	V	E	N		H	A	T	R	E	D		
C	O	N	G	E	A	L		A	W	I	N	G
H	I	T		C	H	A		S	E	G	U	E
A	D	S		O	N	S		E	R	N	S	T

Yesterday's answer 3-1



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jensen Ackles, 30; Nik Kershaw, 50; Ron Howard, 54; Harry Belafonte, 81

Happy Birthday: Don't lose sight of what you really want or let your emotions give you an excuse not to follow through. You will have the drive required to do something great if you can bypass the trials and tribulations with which others clutter your path. This year, your journey is about your goals. Your numbers are 4, 15, 26, 29, 31, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): No fear will lead to adventure and excitement. Love is in the stars and meeting new people will turn into a medley of interesting events. A chance to make a power play in your favor is probable. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Open up and be honest, especially about something you believe in or a relationship that is going through difficulty. Money can't buy friendship or love but it can destroy the foundation of close connections you are involved in. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't stop until you have reached your goals. You can raise your self-esteem and set higher standards that will help you strive for more in all aspects of your life. Emotional matters can be resolved if you don't get angry or jealous. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Openness, honesty and a willingness to compromise will be required where serious relationships are concerned. If the party involved doesn't reciprocate, rethink your strategy and possibly move on. Let go of the past and new doors will open. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): The decisions and extra thought you put into your vocation will improve your position as the month progresses. An offer from someone you know outside of work must be considered. You are overdue for a change, especially if it's to a higher income. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Avoid an emotional argument that could potentially lead to a parting of the ways. Back down if you want to keep the peace but don't expect the problem to go away. Rethink your strategy and find alternatives. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You should be getting out and doing fun things or at least attending an event that interests you. There is a lot to consider regarding your lifestyle and where you see yourself heading in the future. ✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Open up to suggestions being offered by outsiders. Anyone too close to your situation will not be of any help. Be willing to make a few concessions in order to get things done. There are gains to be made. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't let your excitement and desire for adventure get the better of you. Think matters through before you jump in with both feet. You may get more than you bargained for, especially where authority figures or red tape issues are concerned. ✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Someone may try to borrow or take advantage of you today. Offer wisdom, not your cash or you may end up in an emotionally draining situation. Be helpful but practical. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Participate in events, fundraisers or anything that will allow you to put your humanitarian traits to good use. You will impress the people around you and that can promote a healthy love connection with someone you are currently with or someone new, if you are single. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): A pushy or demanding attitude will backfire, leaving you in the lurch. You have to set your own standard if you want things to go your way but be fair with the people you are dealing with. Otherwise, you will end up having to go it alone. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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Birthday Baby: You are disciplined, but imaginative, caring but pragmatic. You are proactive, direct and friendly but know how to keep your distance.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			9		8			
	9						4	
		1		7		3		
9			5		6			8
				8				
1			2		3			7
		4		1		8		
	5						9	
			4		7			

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 3/01

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

7	4	1	8	3	6	9	2	5
9	5	3	4	2	7	6	1	8
6	2	8	9	1	5	3	7	4
1	3	4	7	6	8	2	5	9
2	9	7	3	5	4	1	8	6
5	8	6	1	9	2	4	3	7
4	1	5	2	7	9	8	6	3
8	7	2	6	4	3	5	9	1
3	6	9	5	8	1	7	4	2

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 3/29

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

CLAY POKER CHIPS **Solution: 10 letters**

C	S	D	S	T	O	R	I	N	G	D	D	T	O	T
S	R	E	B	M	U	N	R	E	I	Q	I	U	R	N
P	E	A	L	S	O	E	N	V	L	U	A	C	C	E
E	S	L	F	E	T	O	A	S	A	A	P	A	E	M
C	D	E	D	T	C	Y	T	A	P	L	S	P	S	T
I	N	R	A	N	S	T	L	H	H	I	U	I	N	R
A	O	P	E	S	A	M	I	E	N	T	H	E	E	O
L	M	E	D	L	O	H	A	O	S	Y	C	C	K	S
T	A	D	V	B	B	R	S	N	N	A	M	E	O	S
Y	I	I	E	E	T	A	P	T	S	E	B	S	T	A
S	D	T	R	S	N	S	R	E	D	H	E	F	(B)	N
D	S	R	U	E	I	L	D	U	U	N	I	Q	(U)	E
R	E	A	L	T	T	G	Y	E	D	G	U	P	(L)	U
A	N	T	E	S	E	A	N	S	R	O	L	O	(C)	L
C	T	E	S	D	L	O	M	S	P	O	K	E	R	B

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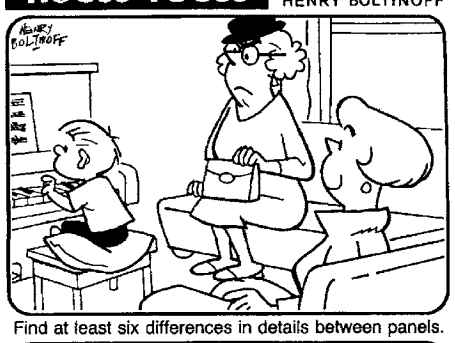
Ante, Assortment, Avid, Best, Bets, Blue, Cards, Case, Casinos, Chips, Club, Colors, Craftsmanship, Dealer, Designs, Diamonds, Dice, Durable, Edge, Evenly, Gifts, Handle, Hearts, Hold 'em, Material, Mold, Numbers, Paid, Pattern, Pieces, Poker, Pros, Quality, Rate, Real, Reds, Round, Rules, Sale, Selection, Sets, Smooth, Specialty, Storing, Styles, Tokens, Unique, Value

Yesterday's Answer: Cotillion

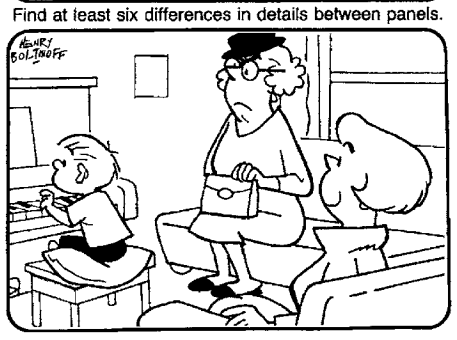
We listened to your requests! **TREASURY #6** is the first-ever Wonderword book containing only 20 x 20 puzzles, with 75 of these large puzzles. To order, send check or money order for $10.95 each plus $3.25 p&h ($14.20 total each, U.S. funds only) for the first volume. $1.50 p&h for each additional volume, to Wonderword, Universal Press Syndicate, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free 1-800-255-6734, ext. 8688. Order online at upuzzles.com.

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Visitor's shoes are different. 2. Sheet on piano is blank. 3. Mom's hair is longer. 4. Picture is added to wall. 5. Window is lower. 6. Visitor's right hand is not visible.

Wishing Well®

3	8	6	2	8	7	3	8	5	2	6	7	6
Y	E	F	D	X	E	O	P	S	E	I	S	G
4	5	3	5	7	3	6	3	7	3	7	8	7
F	T	U	A	P	C	H	O	E	P	X	R	P
2	6	7	8	7	2	4	8	5	7	4	6	5
F	T	E	E	R	I	O	S	Y	I	R	F	I
3	4	8	4	3	4	3	6	4	2	8	6	2
E	G	S	I	B	V	E	O	E	N	I	R	E
4	8	6	5	7	4	6	2	6	7	4	8	7
O	V	T	N	E	T	H	G	E	N	H	E	C
5	7	5	8	5	6	5	6	4	5	2	6	4
T	E	O	L	U	T	C	R	E	H	O	U	R
2	6	2	3	8	4	8	6	3	8	3	2	3
A	T	L	T	O	S	V	H	T	E	E	S	R

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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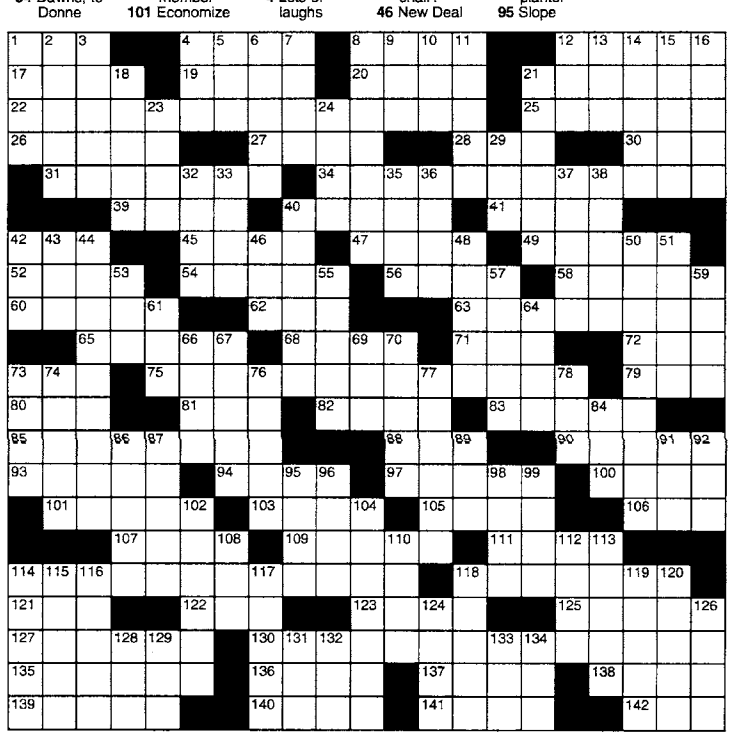
Super Crossword

A PLUS

ACROSS
1 Buddy
4 Verne hero
8 Cantata composer
12 Goo
17 "— corny as Kansas ..."
19 Orenburg's river
20 Literary pseudonym
21 Like Schoenberg's music
22 Like Felix Unger?
25 Act like Holmes
26 "— Card" ('90 film)
27 Comic Orson
28 Bungle
30 Sweater letter
31 On the nose
34 Skinny novelist?
39 Get on
40 Rocker Tom
41 Curly coif
42 "Saving Private Ryan" extras
45 Moffo or Magnani
47 Reggae's Peter
49 Offer an apple?
52 Pinnacle
54 Dawns, to Donne
56 Coarse flour
58 "— on My Pillow" ('58 song)
60 Stiller's partner
62 Tread the boards
63 Man from Munich
65 Ponderosa, for one
68 Mrs. Zeus
71 Mineral suffix
72 Sgt., e.g.
73 Gamble
75 Extremely encouraging individual?
79 Kitten's comment
80 Sharpton and Yankovic
81 Hockey great
82 A sweeping success?
83 Calliope's sister
85 '66 Tommy Roe tune
88 Merino male
90 Shiva worshiper
93 Throw forcefully
94 "The Ramayana" heroine
97 Actress Samantha
100 Jury member
101 Economize
103 Calligraphy supply
105 Land in the sea
106 Longing
107 Jets, Mets, or Nets
109 Release
111 Hideaway
114 Dishonest anchorman?
118 New Jersey's Pine —
121 Port: abbr.
122 Director Lupino
123 "Dies —"
125 Be of use
127 Bring to light
130 Corrupt college official?
135 Acid's opposite
136 Bronte heroine
137 Ice-cream thickener
138 Writer Hunter
139 June birthstone
140 Paper quantity
141 Stink
142 Prior to, to Prior

DOWN
1 BB-gun sound
2 "That's —" ('53 tune)
3 Paint ingredient
4 Lots of laughs
5 Part of NATO
6 Hayes of westerns
7 Crafter's need
8 Publisher Cerf
9 Ginger —
10 Security grp.
11 Couldn't stand
12 Canonized Mlle.
13 King's "Salem's —"
14 Motionless
15 "— Man" ('78 song)
16 Singer John
18 Farm sight
21 Directionless
23 Native Peruvian
24 Yarn
29 Singer Chris
32 Soho streetcar
33 Carson's successor
35 Particle
36 AMEX rival
37 Scacchi of "The Player"
38 Seascape painter
40 Cisco's chum
42 Pin
43 The — Capades
44 Einstein's chair?
46 New Deal agcy.
48 Convent wear
50 Dentist's fee?
51 Vestige
53 Geologic division
55 Cook veggies
57 Make chair legs
59 Chilly powder?
61 Social worker?
64 Swerve
66 Word with pork or karate
67 Toast start
69 Dietary abbr.
70 TV's "Hearts —"
73 Big party
74 Cary of "The Princess Bride"
76 Bit of a beach?
77 Leisurely, to Leoncavallo
78 Team scream
84 Palm oil?
86 Lloyd Webber musical
87 Principle
89 Booker T.'s group
91 Billy — Williams
92 Fancy planter
95 Slope
96 Cain's victim
98 — breve
99 Bring up
102 Gauguin setting
104 Feminist Gloria
108 Pie ingredient?
110 Greek sandwich
112 Neighbor of Turkey
113 Variety show
114 Tight
115 Actress Berry
116 Slezak or Alexander
117 Consumer advocate Ralph
118 Stocking shade
119 Credulous
120 Indian instrument
124 Way over yonder
126 Director Adrian
128 Roller-coaster unit
129 Under the weather
131 Hook's mate
132 Southern constellation
133 Scottish refusal
134 Annoy



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Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

1. GEOGRAPHY: In what body of water are the Maldive islands located?
2. COMICS: What is Superman's dog named?
3. ROYALTY: In what famous church were Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer wed?
4. MOVIES: In what movie does the character Popeye Doyle star?
5. ENTERTAINERS: Which comedian came up with the character called "the hippy dippy weatherman."
6. MUSIC: What is Elvis Costello's birth name?
7. ADVERTISING: What company's products are associated with Elsie the Cow?
8. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president pledged a "New Deal" for the United States?
9. LITERATURE: Who wrote the novel "Dr. Zhivago"?
10. ANATOMY: What is a sarcoma?

Answers

1. Indian Ocean
2. Krypto
3. St. Paul's Cathedral
4. "The French Connection"/Gene Hackman
5. George Carlin
6. Declan Patrick McManus
7. Borden
8. Franklin Roosevelt
9. Boris Pasternak
10. A malignant tumor in connective tissue, bone or muscle

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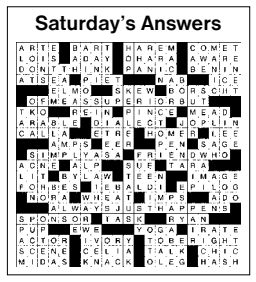
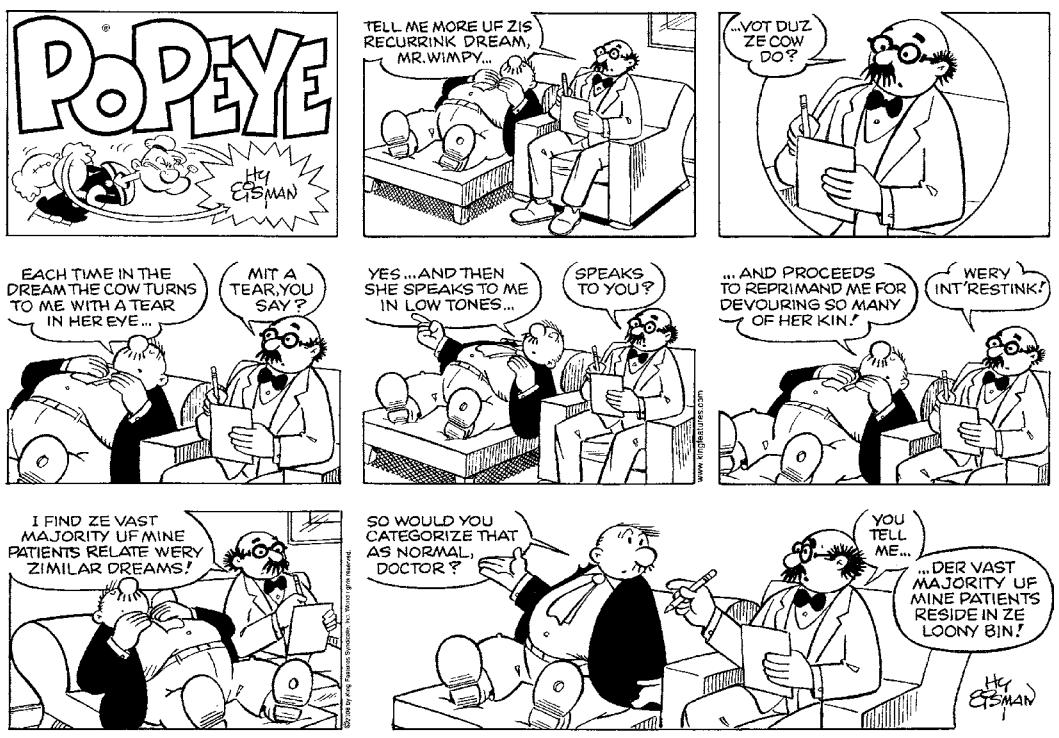
Saturday's Answers

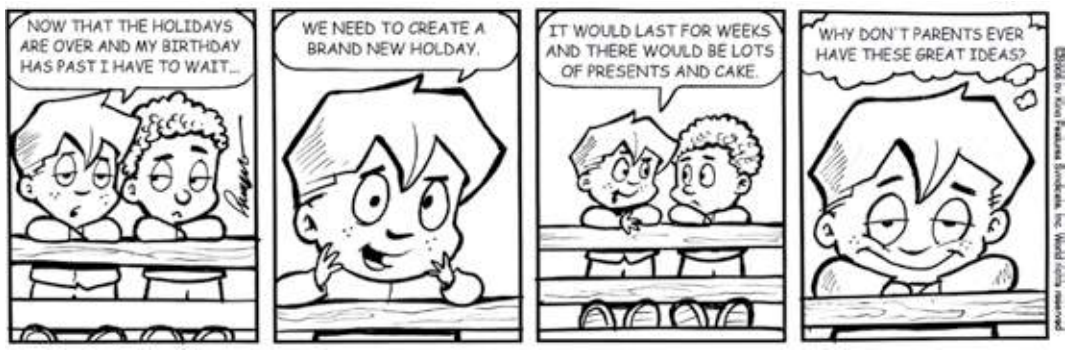


POPEYE



Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



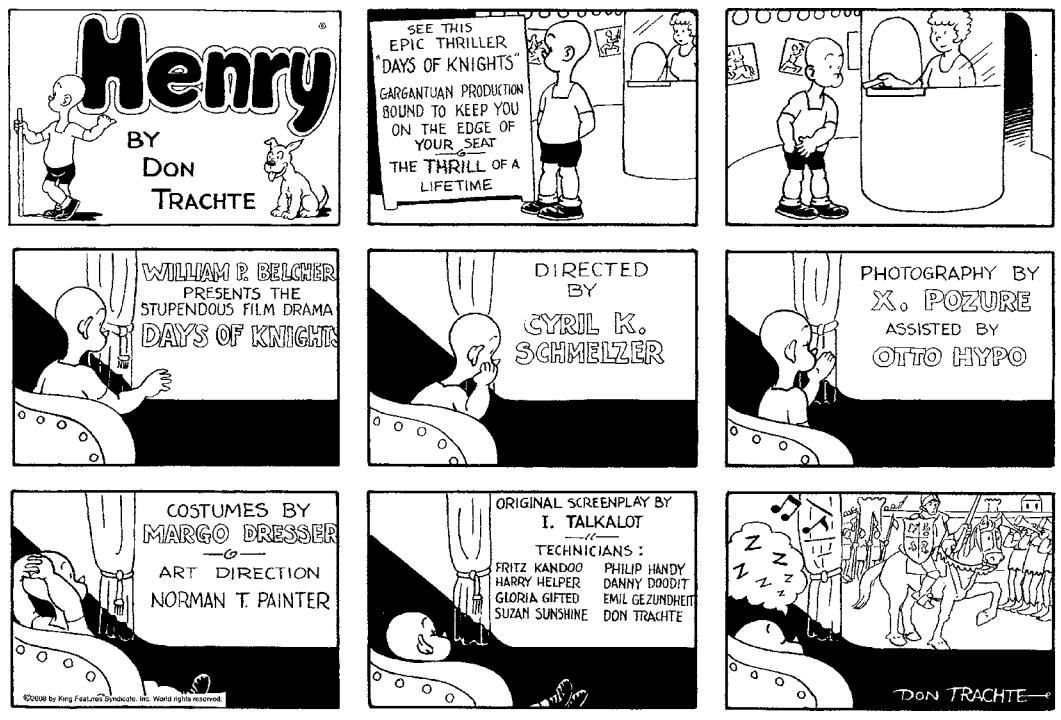
The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

MARK TRAIL

Henry

BY DON TRACHTE



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1 ACCOUNTANT (ST 7365)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: ILC Corporation dba Ladera Int'l School of Saipan @288-2006.

1 CASHIER (ST 7366)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: P&S Inc. dba 888 Poker, LA Poker @233-3228.

1 POKER ATTENDANT (ST 7367)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: P&S Inc. dba 888 Poker, LA Poker @233-3228.

2 TOUR COORDINATOR (ST 7368)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Star 1 Corporation dba Star Tour & Star ATV Tracking @483-5252.

TRAVEL AGENT (ST 7369)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Land Star Corporation dba Land Star Tour Agency @233-2452.

1 TOUR GUIDE (ST 7370)
Salary:$3.55-$4.00/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation provided. Contact: Korea Tourism, Inc. dba Koreana Tours Bureau @233-3004.

2 HAND PACKAGER (ST 7371)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; free medical expense & workmen's compensation. Contact: United International Corporation @235-6888/7888.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (ST 7372)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self arranged food; free medical expense & workmen's compensation. Contact: United International Corporation @235-6888/7888.

1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (ST 7373)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Employer provided housing; workmen compensation & medical insurance. Contact: Pacific Blue Corporation dba PC Outlet CNMI @233-0168.

1 (GEN.) MAINTENANCE REP. (ST 7374)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Medical & workmen compensation provided. Contact: Pacific Blue Corporation dba PC Outlet CNMI @233-0168.

1 COMPUTER TECHNICIAN (ST 7375)
Salary:$4.50/hour. Benefits: Employer provided housing; self provided food; workmen compensation & medical insurance. Contact: Pacific Blue Corporation dba PC Outlet CNMI @233-0168.

1 DRESS MAKER (ST 7376)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; workmen's compensation provided & transportation self arrange. Contact: Editha G. Welle dba Rit'z Dress Shop @235-4536.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (ST 7377)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation will be employer provided. Contact: Servino & Assoc., Inc. @235-5073.

1 MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (ThS 0001)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Mugen Corporation @323-9238.

1 CASHIER (ThS 0002)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: McMillan Corporation/ James McMillan dba J & N Mini Mart @322-4616.

1 ACCOUNTANT (ThS 0003)
Salary:$800.00-1,000.00/month. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; vacation & sick leaves, medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Western Sales Trading Company @322-6031.

1 BEAUTICIAN (ThS 0004)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Hen Qi Li Corp. @235-6891.

1 MASON (ThS 0005)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Universal Development Inc. @322-5881.

1 DRESSMAKER (ThS 0006)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Hong Fu, Inc. @233-6160 / 287-5998.

WHATZIT Solution:
Bridge Over Troubled Waters

1 MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (ThS 0001)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Mugen Corporation @ 323-9238.

1 CASHIER (ThS 0002)
Salary:$3.05/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: McMillan Corporation/ James McMillan dba J & N Mini Mart @ 322-4616.

1 ACCOUNTANT (ThS 0003)
Salary:$800.00-1,000.00/month. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; vacation & sick leaves, medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Western Sales Trading Company @ 322-6031.

1 BEAUTICIAN (ThS 0004)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Hen Qi Li Corp. @ 235-6891.

1 MASON (ThS 0005)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Universal Development Inc. @ 322-5881.

1 DRESSMAKER (ThS 0006)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self-arranged housing; self-provided food; medical & workers compensation provided by employer. Contact: Hong Fu, Inc. @ 233-6160 / 287-5998.

1 ADMINISTRATIVE ASST. (SM 0001)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmens compensation & medical. Contact: Allied Construction Corp. @234-7492.

1 ELECTRICIAN (SM 0002)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmens compensation & medical. Contact: Allied Construction Corp. @234-7492.

1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (SM 0003)
Salary:$615.33-$750.00/monthly. Benefits: ER provide housing; self provide food; w/transportation service; worksmen compensation & medical expense. Contact: Island Investment Inc. @234-6089.

AIRCON & REF. TECH. (SM 0004)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: E.C Entertainment & Promo Inc. dba Woolwich Auto Shop @235-3072/5.

1 HUMAN RESOURCE ASSISTANT (SM 0005)
Salary:$3.55-$8.00/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Brilliant Star Montessori School dba Brilliant Star School @323-7827.

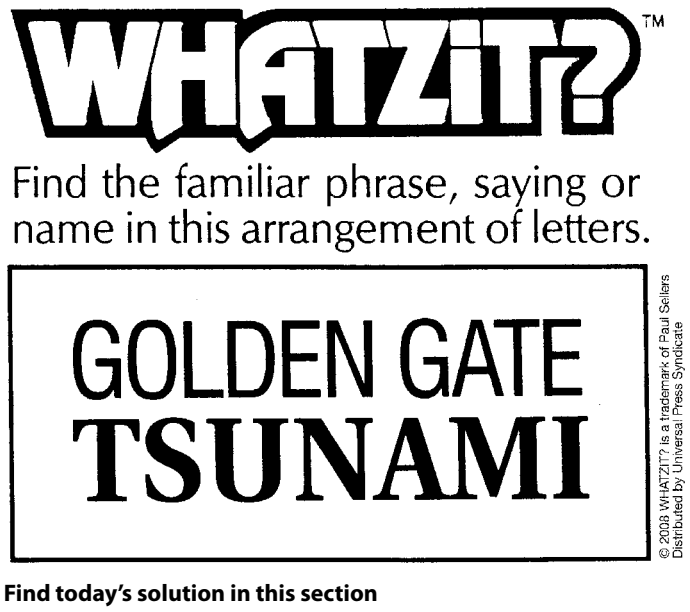
1 MAINTENANCE WORKER (SM 0006)
Salary:$3.55-$4.50/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workmen's compensation provided. Contact: Brilliant Star Montessori School dba Brilliant Star School @323-7827.

1 CARPENTER (SM 0007)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Barracks (utilities $10); self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Uni-World Int'l Inc. dba Uni-World Construction Inc. @288-1312.

1 ELECTRICIAN (SM 0008)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Barracks (utilities $10); self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Uni-World Int'l Inc. dba Uni-World Construction Inc. @288-1312.

1 CARPENTER (SM 0009)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Barracks (utilities $10); self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Uni-World Int'l Inc. dba Uni-World Construction Inc. @288-1312.

1 MASON (SM 0010)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Barracks (utilities $10); self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Uni-World Int'l Inc. dba Uni-World Construction Inc. @288-1312.



Find today's solution in this section

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	**$25**
• 5-Liner	**$35**
• 3-Liner with picture	**$45**
• 5-Liner with picture	**$55**

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

All job vacancy announcements will be published for two issues in each of two successive weeks.

1st position	**$13.00**
2nd position	**$5.00**
Succeeding positions	**$2.00**

These rates apply to all job vacancy announcements in Saipan that include corresponding benefits and which positions are all under the same company name and dba.

Newspaper clippings are also available for $.25 per copy.

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Job Vacancy Announcements

Monday Through Friday Issues: All ads placed before 12 noon will come out the next publication date.

Saturday And Sunday Issues:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on either Sunday or Monday issues.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

Job Vacancy Announcements

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

CLASSIFIED ADS

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1 CABLE SPLICER (SM 0011)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Barracks (utilities $10); self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Uni-World Int'l Inc. dba Uni-World Construction Inc. @288-1312.

1 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT (SM 0012)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Barracks (utilities $10); self provided food; workmen's compensation & medical. Contact: Uni-World Int'l Inc. dba Uni-World Construction Inc. @288-1312.

1 COOK HELPER (SM 0013)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; free food; medical covered under workers compensation. Contact: Robert J. Bracken dba Spicy Thai Noodle Place @235-8603.

2 EXECUTIVE CHEF (SM 0014)
Salary:$7.00/hour. Benefits: Self arranged housing; free food; medical covered under workers compensation. Contact: Robert J. Bracken dba Spicy Thai Noodle Place @235-8603.

1 FOUNTAIN SERVER (SM 0015)
Salary:$3.70/hour. Benefits: Workers compensation & medical. Contact: 3's Inc. dba Hula Girl @234-3533.

2 COOK (THS 0007)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical & workman compensation provided. Contact: Da Kine, Inc. dba Hawaii Bar & Grill @285-3740.

1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (THS 0008)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Islas Marianas, Inc. dba Ace Poker @233-2211.

1 SALES REPRESENTATIVE (THS 0009)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Islas Marianas, Inc. dba Ace Poker @233-2211.

1 OPERATION MANAGER (THS 0010)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Hanmi, Inc. dba Hanmi Hardware @233-2211.

1 ELECTRICIAN (THS 0011)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Hanmi, Inc. dba Hanmi Hardware @233-2211.

1 GENERAL MANAGER (THS 0012)
Salary:$12.50/hour. Benefits: Employer provide housing; employee provide food; employer provides medical & workers compensation insurance. Contact: Calvo's Insurance Underwriters (CNMI) Inc. @234-5691/4/8.

1 ELECTRONIC TECHNICIAN (THS 0013)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Oriental Corporation dba Electronics World @233-1212.

2 MASON (THS 0014)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; own food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Lolita N. Palacios dba J&L House Rental @234-1081.

1 CARPENTER (THS 0015)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; own food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Lolita N. Palacios dba J&L House Rental @234-1081.

1 COMMERCIAL CLEANER (THS 0016)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; own food; medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: Lolita N. Palacios dba J&L House Rental @234-1081.

1 BIOMEDICAL (SERVICE ENGINEER) TECHNICIAN (THS 0017)
Salary:$5.00-$15.00/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; workers compensation as required by law & medical coverage as required by law. Contact: Pacific Biomedical Services, Inc. dba PBSI @288-0566.

1 VIDEO OPERATOR (SM 0016)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workmen's compensation. Contact: KP Enterprises, Inc. dba KP's Mart, KP Video Tape Production, KP Video, KP Accounting & Book Keeping @323-5568/433-2534.

1 GENERAL MANAGER (SM 0017)
Salary:$1,500.00/monthly. Benefits: Free housing; self provided food; surety bond; medical & worksmen compensation. Contact: ASG Corporation dba Elite Printing @288-6465/2677.

1 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT (SM 0018)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self arrange housing; self provide food; worksmen compensation & medical. Contact: Minami Kaze Corporation dba Minami Kaze Saipan @234-2101.

1 BUILDING MAINTENANCE REPAIRER (SM 0019)
Salary:$700.00/monthly. Benefits: Self arranged housing; self provided food; medical & workers compensation. Contact: Milne & Reyes Enterprises @235-6657.

1 MAINTENANCE MECHANIC (SM 0020)
Salary:$3.55-$4.75/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical; workmen's compensation & transportation self provided. Contact: Silk Road Corporation dba Saipan Country Club @234-8718.

3 GROUNDSKEEPER (SM 0021)
Salary:$3.55-$4.75/hour. Benefits: Self provided housing; self provided food; medical; workmen's compensation & transportation self provided. Contact: Silk Road Corporation dba Saipan Country Club @234-8718.

1 PACKER (SM 0022)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Medical & workers compensation. Contact: Onwel Manufacturing (Saipan), Ltd. @234-9522.

1 UPHOLSTERER (SM 0023)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Workmen compensation & medical expenses. Contact: Sikayun Virginia G. dba 3A's Polyshine @235-8938.

1 TECHNICIAN AUTO (AUTOMOBILE ACCESSORIES INSTALLER) (SM 0024)
Salary:$3.55/hour. Benefits: Self housing; self food; workmen compensation & medical expenses. Contact: Sikayun Virginia G. dba 3A's Polyshine @235-8938.

Duncan has 31 points in Spurs' win

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Tim Duncan had 31 points and 15 rebounds and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Dallas Mavericks 97-94 on Thursday night for their seventh straight win.

Manu Ginobili added 17 points for San Antonio and Michael Finley scored 16.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 28 points for the Mavericks and Josh Howard and reserve Brandon Bass each added 16.

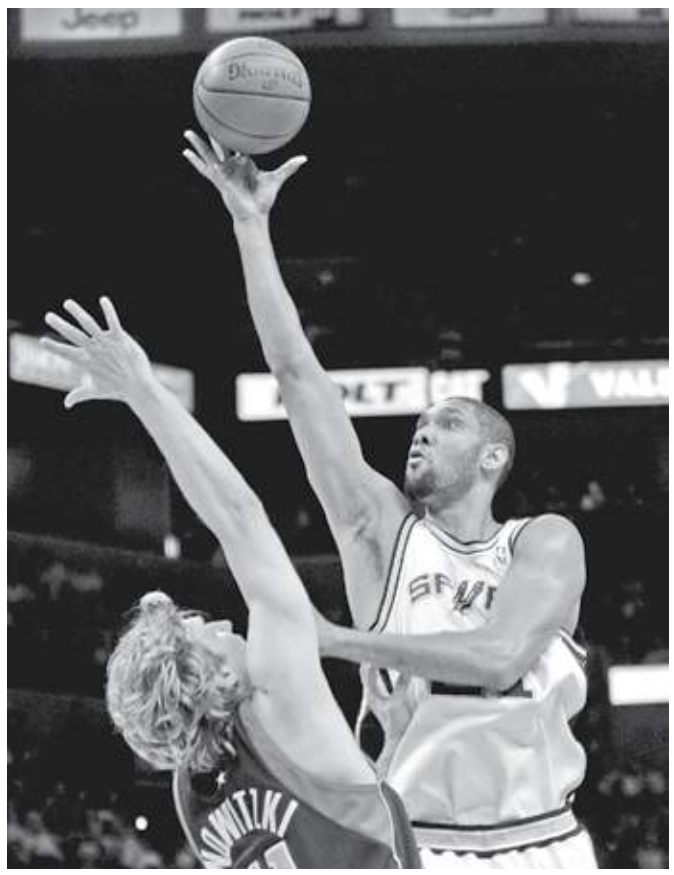
The Mavericks are 3-2 with new addition Jason Kidd, who had 10 assists Thursday and scored seven points. The loss snapped a three-game winning streak for Dallas, which is in a tight race with the Spurs and two other teams for the Southwest Division lead.

The Spurs were up by one, 73-72, heading into the fourth quarter. With the game tied at 94, Erick Dampier fouled Duncan, who sank both shots from the line to put San Antonio up 96-94 with 34.5 seconds to go.

Nowitzki missed two shots with less than 30 seconds on the clock, and Jason Terry's shot was blocked by Bruce Bowen with 3.9 seconds left. The Spurs got the ball back with 3.3 seconds to go, and Dampier fouled Finley with 0.4 left. Finley hit the first of two from the line.

The game was tied four times in the fourth quarter as the teams traded baskets and neither took a lead of more than five points in the period.

Bowen added 14 points for the Spurs and Tony Parker had 10.



AP

San Antonio Spurs forward Tim Duncan (21) shoots over Dallas Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki, of Germany, during the first quarter of their NBA basketball game in San Antonio, Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008.

After coming out of halftime tied at 47 and staying close more than 5 minutes into the third quarter, each team took turns holding the momentum.

The Mavericks went up by 10 after a 16-4 run that included a 3 from a pumped Nowitzki off a feed from Kidd and ended with a goaltending call against Robert Horry that gave Terry a basket and put Dallas up 67-57 with 3:44 to play.

But the Spurs answered with a 13-1 burst, including two free throws thanks to technicals called on Terry and Dallas coach Avery Johnson in an increasingly testy atmosphere. Finley scored nine points in the surge that gave San Antonio a 70-68 lead with 1:20 to go.

Ime Udoka's last-second corner 3 put the Spurs up 73-72 with one period to play.

In the first half, Kidd, who has brought a passing mentality to the Mavericks since his return to the team that drafted him No. 2 overall in 1994, accounted for seven of the team's 11 assists.

Lakers 106, Heat 88

At Los Angeles, Jordan Farmar scored a career-high 24 points, Kobe Bryant added 21 and the Los Angeles Lakers extended their winning streak to a season-best 10 games.

The Lakers (41-17) maintained their one-game lead over the defending champion San Antonio Spurs for best record in the Western Conference, and lead Phoenix and New Orleans by two. Just 6 1/2 games separate the top nine teams in the West.

Dwyane Wade had 18 points for Miami after playing 13 scoreless minutes during a foul-plagued first half.

Nets 120, Bucks 106

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, stepping on the court for the first time since being acquired last week in an eight-player trade for Jason Kidd, Devin Harris scored 16 of his 21 points in a spectacular game-changing early spurt for New Jersey.

Vince Carter and Richard Jefferson added 19 points apiece and Bostjan Nachbar scored all 13 of his in the fourth quarter to help New Jersey beat Milwaukee for the third straight time this season.

Michael Redd had 33 points and Andrew Bogut had 22 points and 15 rebounds for the Bucks.

Clippers waive Sam Cassell

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The last-place Clippers waived injury-prone Sam Cassell on Thursday, clearing the way for him to join another team, possibly the Boston Celtics.

Cassell has missed four straight games with a sprained right wrist.

He averaged 12.8 points, 4.7 assists, 2.8 rebounds and 25.7 minutes in 38 games. Earlier in the season, the 38-year-old point guard missed 12 games with a strained left calf.

In all, Cassell had missed 41 games over the last two seasons because of a variety of injuries and illnesses. He is earning $6.1 million this season—the final year of his contract.

"After weighing all of the options and after conversations with Sam we believe this is the best solution for this team," general manager Elgin Baylor said in a statement. "We know and appreciate the many contributions Sam made during the last three years, and we wish him nothing but the best."

Cassell has to clear waivers by midnight Eastern on Friday to be eligible to play for another team in the postseason.

Three weeks ago, Cassell denied a Boston Globe report that he was trying to buy out his contract so he could play for the Eastern Conference-leading Celtics.

But he made no secret that he was unhappy about the Clippers' mounting losses. Cassell has said he'd like to play another season before retiring and going into coaching.

If Cassell joins Boston, he would be reunited with Kevin Garnett, his former teammate in Minnesota.

Cassell's most productive season with the Clippers came in 2005-06, when he averaged 17.2 points and 6.3 assists. He helped them beat Denver in the first round of the playoffs before getting within a game of reaching the Western Conference finals. He was a member of NBA championship teams in Houston in 1994-95.

The Clippers (19-36) are last in the Pacific Division. They have played without injured star forward Elton Brand and point guard Shaun Livingston all season because of injuries.

NBA BRIEFS

Wizards' Butler has labral tear in hip

WASHINGTON (AP)—It raised a few eyebrows when Caron Butler was listed as day-to-day for nearly a month. Now the Washington Wizards have discovered the reason. A re-examination of the All-Star forward's hip revealed a small labral tear of the left joint. Butler will be re-examined next week—the injury might require surgery—and coach Eddie Jordan made it sound as if his slumping team isn't expecting its toughest player to return anytime soon. "I am not going to talk about the injury and the timing and all of that," Jordan said Thursday. "But as a player and as a human being, he means a lot to us. We just have to go forward with the guys we have." Butler has missed the past 10 games with what was originally diagnosed as a strained hip flexor. He did not accompany the Wizards on the road trip that ends Friday night at Chicago. The Wizards are 4-10 this season when Butler doesn't play. He is averaging 21.4 points, 6.8 rebounds, 4.5 assists and 2.4 steals and earned a spot in the All-Star game for the second time, although he could not play because of the injury. The Wizards, who have also played most of the season without injured point guard Gilbert Arenas, have lost 11 of 14 games to fall to sixth place in the Eastern Conference.

Pacers' Williams out at least 1 game

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Indiana Pacers forward Shawne Williams will miss at least one game after a man who had just left Williams' home was arrested on a murder charge. Williams did not practice with the team on Thursday and will not travel with the Pacers to their game at Toronto on Friday. Team CEO Donnie Walsh said Williams was not suspended but needed time to sort out what happened. Officers arrested 20-year-old Gary Bohannon of Memphis, Tenn., on a Tennessee warrant for murder Wednesday night, after he allegedly left Williams' home in a truck registered to Williams. Williams attorney John Tompkins said his client didn't know Bohannon was at his home and did not invite him there. Tompkins said Williams was cooperating with investigators.

Donald off to quick start at Honda

The Honda Classic

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — Luke Donald's opening round in The Honda Classic was far from perfect. He missed five greens and seven fairways, including five straight on the back nine.

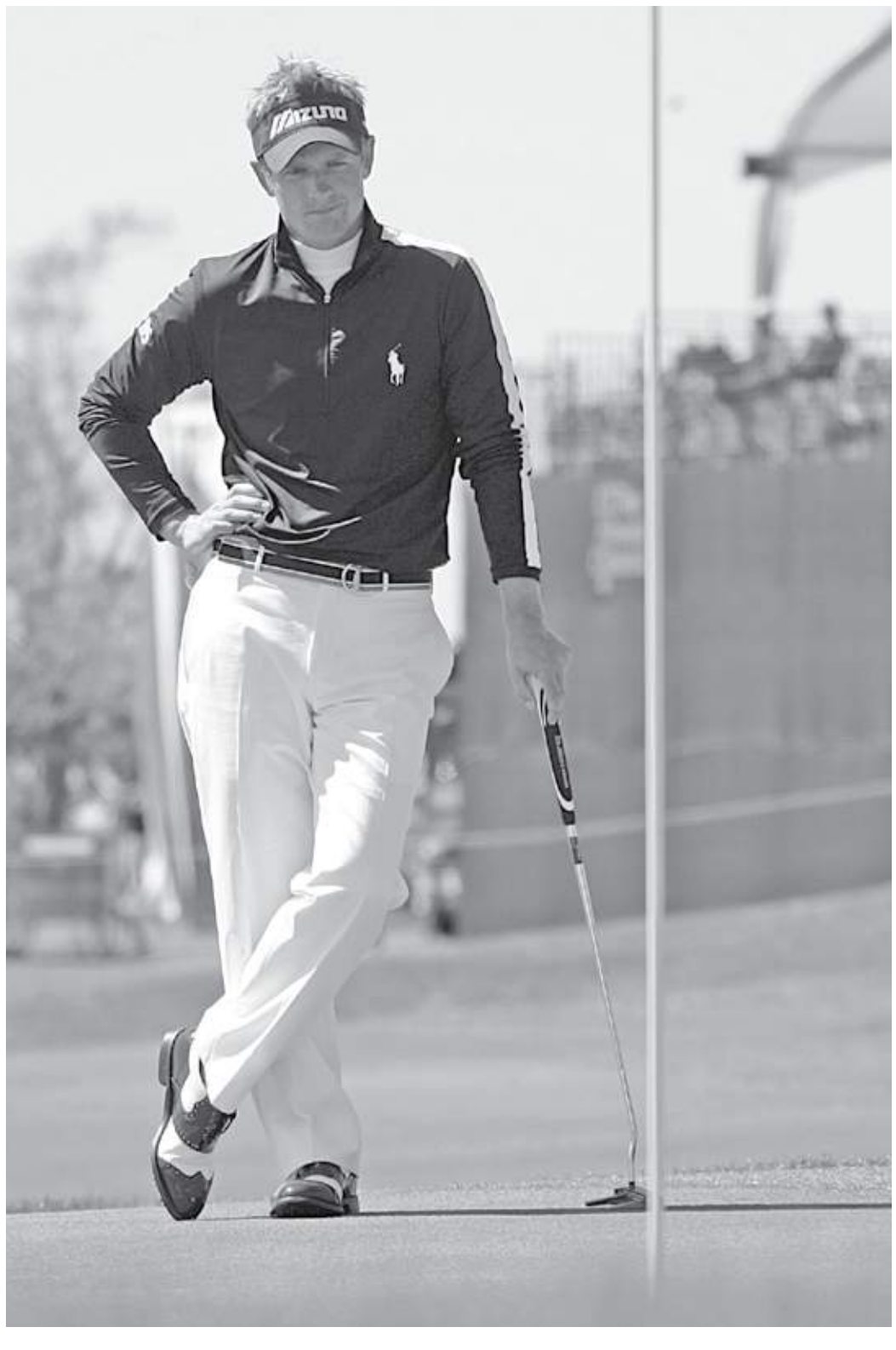
And conditions at windy, cool PGA National were hardly optimal for scoring.

Yet somehow, Donald found a way to post the Honda's best score in three years.

A bogey-free 64 Thursday gave Donald a one-shot lead over Brian Davis and a two-shot edge on Matt Jones after the first round of the Honda - an event Donald won two years ago when it was at nearby Mirasol, a considerably easier track.

"I did a lot of good things around the greens and when I had my chances I took them," Donald said. "I didn't drive it particularly well. I need to improve that. I probably hit only half the fairways, which is not quite good enough. Apart from that, everything was very good."

Donald posted the lowest round at a Honda since Padraig Harrington shot a final-round 63 to win in 2005 at Mirasol, and the 64 was the best in 571 tournament rounds since the event moved to PGA National—where Mark Wilson's winning score a year ago was 5 under. Wilson shot a 73 on Thursday.



Luke Donald, from England, studies his putt on the 18th green during the Honda Classic golf tournament in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008. AP

"Golf is just a tough game sometimes," Donald said. "It sometimes gets you down, and we've all been there before, but luckily right now I feel pretty confident about my game. I feel confident about where I'm heading, and I'm definitely going the right direction."

He wasn't alone in feeling that way.

Matt Jones (66) was alone in third, two shots off the pace, with a slew of others—including Ernie Els, the world's No. 4 player—three shots back. Els was one of only 10 players to make birdie at the arduous, 508-yard, par-4 10th, which was his first hole of the day.

"This is really my first full event, so to speak, of the year over here, so I needed to get off to a good start," said Els, whose PGA Tour campaign for 2008 began with a first-round exit last week in the Accenture Match Play. "I was a little nervy this morning to force myself to get off to a good start, and I've had that now, so I can start building on that."

Jose Coceres, who lost to Wilson in a four-man playoff last year, and Jesper Parnevik were in a group within four shots of Donald at 68.

"You've almost got to have a major mentality here," Parnevik said.

He already overcame a major problem here this week.

Parnevik fell ill playing in Mexico last weekend; a dirty drinking glass, he said, was the culprit that left him unable to eat any solid food since Saturday and took 11 pounds off his already-slim frame.

His preparation on Wednesday consisted primarily of getting intravenous fluids in the tour's medical trailer. But even with a 6:50 a.m. tee time, Parnevik—who, like Donald and a bunch of other South Florida residents, only lives a few minutes from the course—battled his way to a 68.

"Everybody that lives here knows that this can happen," Parnevik said. "But how it goes from almost 90 (degrees) to 43 here in a couple days is hard for a lot of people to understand."

Much like the Florida temperatures the last few days, Jimmy Walker's game went from hot to cold in a real hurry.

Walker was ninth alternate at the start of the week and only got in the field because another alternate—Michael Sim, who replaced Ryder Cup captain Paul Azinger—withdrew.

For a while, Walker took full advantage of the chance. He was within one stroke of Donald as he went to the par-4 15th, but double-bogey there derailed his run at the lead and he finished with a 67.

Donald gets introduced as a former Honda champion, but he doesn't really feel like one, since being at a different venue gives the tournament a decidedly different feel. After winning in '06 at Mirasol, Donald's debut at the Honda's new home last year was forgettable—a first-round 77 doomed his repeat chances.

This time, he's back in the ideal position.

"If you get a strong wind, constant wind, it's still not an easy golf course," Donald said. "Anything under par is a good score."

Bruschi to sign multiyear pact

BOSTON (AP)—Linebacker Tedy Bruschi has agreed to a multiyear contract with the New England Patriots, a sign of stability in a time of turbulence since they lost the Super Bowl.

A person within the league, speaking Thursday night on condition of anonymity, said the deal is expected to be signed Friday.

Bruschi, who suffered a stroke after the 2004 season and returned midway through the next season, started every game this past season. But it had been uncertain if the 34-year-old Bruschi would return after the Patriots lost 17-14 to the New York Giants in the Super Bowl.

Patriots spokesman Stacey James said the team does not confirm contracts until they are signed.

On Feb. 5, defensive back Willie Andrews pleaded not guilty to a marijuana possession charge in Lawrence, Mass., after police said they found him with a half-pound of marijuana. Andrews, who just completed his second year with the team, is free on his own recognizance.

Soon after the Super Bowl, linebacker Junior Seau had arthroscopic surgery on his left rotator cuff for an injury he said he sustained in the fourth game. It was never announced by the team.

Last Friday, Patriots captain and running back Kevin Faulk, one of their most dependable players, was issued a misdemeanor summons for possession of marijuana in Louisiana. He was not arrested or required to post bond.

On Tuesday, New England released starting linebacker Rosevelt Colvin in a possible salary cap move. He was sidelined for the season with a foot injury after playing in the first 11 games.

The Patriots did not designate wide receiver Randy Moss as a franchise player and could lose him to free agency. Cornerback Asante Samuel is a free agent, and safety Eugene Wilson has said he doesn't plan to return. Also, safety Rodney Harrison, a 14-year veteran, hasn't said whether he'll retire.

But Bruschi will be back after recording 115 tackles, including 23 in three postseason games as the Patriots went 18-0 before losing the Super Bowl. He had two sacks, both in the regular season.

Ten days after helping New England win the 2005 Super Bowl, Bruschi was hospitalized for a minor stroke. After having surgery to repair a hole in his heart, he began a comeback and played in the last nine regular season games. He won the Comeback Player of the Year award in 2005, along with Carolina receiver Steve Smith.

He also vigorously defended coach Bill Belichick when the New York Jets accused the Patriots of video recording their coaches' signals after the first game of the 2007 season. The NFL fined Belichick $500,000 and the Patriots $250,000 and stripped the team of a first-round draft choice this year.

On the day of the Super Bowl, the Boston Herald reported that former Patriots employee Matt Walsh claimed he taped St. Louis' practice before New England's 20-17 upset of the Rams in the Super Bowl after the 2001 season.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has said he hopes the NFL is close to an agreement that will allow Walsh to tell the league about any such tapes.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R.-Pa., also is looking into the allegations.

And Willie Gary, who played seven games for the Rams that season, has filed suit in New Orleans accusing the Patriots of fraud, unfair trade practices and engaging in a "pattern of racketeering." Three fans joined in the suit.

Team: Favre retirement rumor is false

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)—Brett Favre's retirement lore is becoming almost as popular as his on-the-field heroics.

On Thursday, the Packers' official Web site briefly reported he was retiring, but the page under the breaking news section was live for only a few minutes.

"There's nothing to it," Packers spokesman Jeff Blumb told The Associated Press. "People who handle our Web site had set up a dummy page in the event he was to retire. They were asked to take down that page."

A call by The AP to Favre's agent, Bus Cook, was not immediately returned.

Cook told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that Favre, in his annual rite of winter, had not made up his mind whether to return for his 18th season. The three-time MVP's decision one way or the other is not expected this week.

Several Internet sites have screen captures of the page that show Favre's picture with a caption saying, "Packers quarterback Brett Favre has announced that he will retire."

The page also had a blank area to enter the story's text and details on general manager Ted Thompson holding a "brief press conference" to talk about the announcement.

This is not the first time a team put major news on its Web site, and then promptly removed it.

On Oct. 23, 1999, the news that Don Baylor had been hired as Cubs manager appeared on the team's Web site, and was subsequently removed within hours. The team denied the story, but on Nov. 1, Baylor was hired.

FBI opens investigation of Roger Clemens

WASHINGTON (AP)—The FBI took up the Roger Clemens case Thursday, told by the Justice Department to investigate whether the star pitcher lied when he testified to Congress he never took performance-enhancing drugs.

The FBI's involvement was announced one day after the leaders of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee told Attorney General Michael Mukasey they weren't sure whether Clemens told the truth under oath at a Feb. 5 deposition and Feb. 13 public hearing.

A probe could result in charges against the seven-time Cy Young Award winner for perjury, making false statements or obstruction of justice. Congress did not ask for a similar investigation of Brian McNamee, the former personal trainer who testified under oath that he injected Clemens with steroids and human growth hormone.

"The request to open an investigation on the congressional testimony of Roger Clemens has been turned over to the FBI and will receive appropriate investigative action by the FBI's Washington field office," FBI spokeswoman Debra Weierman said.

As with Barry Bonds and Marion Jones, Clemens faces scrutiny from federal authorities more for what he said than what he might have done.

Bonds, baseball's home run king and a seven-time MVP, was indicted in November on perjury and obstruction of justice charges stemming from 2003 grand jury testimony in which he denied knowingly using illegal performance-enhancing drugs.

Jones, the track and field star who won five medals at the 2000 Olympics, was sentenced in January to six months in prison for lying about using performance enhancers and her role in a check-fraud scam.

Miguel Tejada, the 2002 AL MVP, also is being investigated by the FBI over whether he made false statements to the House committee three years ago. He told congressional investigators he never took performance enhancers and had no knowledge of other players using or talking about steroids.

AP

Roger Clemens throws a pitch during a workout with minor leaguers at the Houston Astros spring training facility Thursday, Feb. 28, 2008 in Kissimmee, Fla.

Clemens testified that he never used steroids or HGH; McNamee testified he injected Clemens with performance-enhancers at least 16 times from 1998-01.

"We've always expected they would open an investigation," said Clemens' lead lawyer, Rusty Hardin. "They attended the congressional hearing. So what's new?"

IRS Special Agent Jeff Novitzky, a key member of the government's prosecution in the BALCO drug cases, attended the Clemens-McNamee hearing two weeks ago. It was not immediately clear to two law enforcement officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity what role Novitzky or the IRS would play in the FBI inquiry.

Similarly unknown was the role of assistant U.S. attorney Matt Parrella, a federal prosecutor in San Francisco, where the BALCO investigation that ensnared Bonds and Jones is based.

"Separating the investigation of perjury in Congress from everything (federal prosecutors in California) and Novitzky has developed before that would be foolhardy, wasteful and duplicitous," said Richard Emery, one of McNamee's lawyers. "Any indictment that does ensue will obviously be lengthy and complicated and should be the product of a cooperative effort."

Clemens didn't answer questions directly Thursday when approached by reporters at the Houston Astros' spring training camp in Kissimmee, Fla., where he's been throwing batting practice to minor leaguers.

"I'm going to handle it the right way," Clemens said. "You guys are wasting your time. We're going to handle it the right way.

In asking the Justice Department to look into Clemens' statements to Congress, committee chairman Henry Waxman of California and ranking Republican Tom Davis of Virginia said they weren't in a position to reach a definitive judgment on Clemens' truthfulness. They cited McNamee's testimony and that of former Clemens' teammate, Andy Pettitte, who told the committee Clemens admitted HGH use to him nearly a decade ago.

Waxman and Davis both declined comment Thursday.

Pettitte acknowledged he's prepared to be interviewed again about Clemens.

"It makes it extremely difficult," Pettitte said at the Yankees' spring training camp in Tampa, Fla. "I don't like any of this. I cannot stand it. I told you how I feel about him. I hate it. It's like a part of my family that's going to have to go through this."

Waxman's committee felt Clemens' repeated and vigorous denials of McNamee's allegations questioned the legitimacy of the Mitchell Report, prepared by former Senate majority leader George Mitchell and released in December.

Mitchell, a Boston Red Sox director hired by baseball commissioner Bud Selig to examine drug use in the sport, provided the first public accounting of McNamee's allegations that he injected Clemens with HGH and steroids.

Pettitte and Chuck Knoblauch, another former teammate of Clemens with the Yankees, both acknowledged that McNamee was correct when he said they used performance enhancers.

An 18-page memo Waxman sent committee Democrats sets out "seven sets of assertions made by Mr. Clemens in his testimony that appear to be contradicted by other evidence before the committee or implausible."

Those areas involve Clemens' testimony that he has "never taken steroids or HGH"; that McNamee injected him with the painkiller lidocaine; that team trainers gave him pain injections; that he received many vitamin B-12 injections; that he never discussed HGH with McNamee; that he was not at then-teammate Jose Canseco's home from June 8-10, 1998; and that he was "never told" about Mitchell's request to speak to him.

Those same issues were highlighted in the letter to Mukasey, which stated: "We also understand that federal law enforcement officials may have access to additional evidence on these matters." That is a reference to needles, bloodstained gauze and other items McNamee turned over to federal prosecutors in January.

No DNA evidence involving Clemens had been turned over to the FBI's lab in Quantico, Va., the two law enforcement officials told the AP. It was not known if the FBI would seek fingerprints or DNA from Clemens as part of its investigation.

Evidence gathered by the FBI, in consultation with Justice Department prosecutors, is presented to grand juries, which meet in secret and consider whether there is sufficient evidence to indict someone on charges of violating a law.

"There appears to be an enormous initiative to determine whether and from where Roger got steroids from 2002 onwards," Emery said. "That opens the door to an investigation of his home turf, at least."

Cardinals release Spiezio

IRVINE, Calif. (AP)—Utilityman Scott Spiezio was cut by the St. Louis Cardinals on Wednesday, released after being charged in a six-count complaint involving drunken driving and assault in a December car crash.

"We had heard some things about this," Cardinals general manager John Mozeliak said. "Ultimately nothing was ever confirmed to the level it was today. To have this warrant put out there, it completely changes the landscape of what we're dealing with."

A warrant was issued Tuesday for Spiezio, who missed more than a month last year while getting treatment for substance abuse. The warrant was recalled Wednesday after Spiezio's attorney appeared in court, and the arraignment was continued to March 26.

The Orange County district attorney charged Spiezio with misdemeanor counts of driving under the influence, driving under the influence with a blood alcohol content of .08 percent or more, hit and run, aggravated assault, assault and battery.

"We anticipate a successful resolution to this misdemeanor matter," attorney Paul Meyer said.

The 35-year-old Spiezio did not play in Wednesday's exhibition game against St. Louis University at Jupiter, Fla.

"Scott and I will have a statement at a later date," Spiezio's agent, Barry Meister, said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

"Scott is clean and sober, and has been for a significant period of time, and is fully prepared to continue his career. He has had no problems at Cardinals' camp, is in great shape and was and is looking to have a great 2008 season," he said.

Police said the accident occurred Dec. 30. The maximum penalty is two years in state prison.

"We've never been able to talk to him," Irvine police Lt. Rick Handfield said. "The detective has expressed an interest in having Mr. Spiezio come to California."

Spiezio won World Series championships with Anaheim in 2002 and St. Louis in 2006. He has cultivated a hard-rocking image during his 12 seasons in the majors and plays in the heavy metal band SandFrog.

He batted .272 in 119 games with 13 homers and 52 RBIs in 2006. Last year, he appeared in only 82 games because of injuries, illness and treatment, managing only four homers, 31 RBIs and a .269 average.

Spiezio was entering the final season of a two-year, $4.5 million contract. He was released the same way most players are cut, for failure "to exhibit sufficient skill or competitive ability."

That means the Cardinals owe him this year's $2.3 million salary plus a $100,000 buyout of a $2.5 million team option for 2009—because of that, the likelihood of a grievance by the players' union is small.

Asked about Spiezio's release, Cardinals manager Tony La Russa said, ""I think it's a consistent message about what the team represents."

"It wasn't like he escaped last year without catching some heat and the organization acting to try to get him right," he said.

When the Cardinals activated him from the restricted list last September, Spiezio said, "I was out of control for a while. I learned a lot and I'm ready to start contributing in a good way now."

At the time, Spiezio said he'd been struggling with substance abuse for six or seven months, although he wouldn't disclose the substance, saying "I'll save that for the book."

Spiezio is best remembered in Anaheim for a three-run homer in Game 6 against the San Francisco Giants that helped the Angels rally from the largest deficit ever in a potential Series-deciding game.

Spiezio played in Seattle for two seasons before joining the Cardinals in 2006 and helping them win the World Series that year.

Irvine police responded to a report of a single-car crash at 12:20 a.m. on Dec. 30.

Officers found a 2004 BMW registered to Spiezio had crashed into a curb and fence. The driver was seen running from the crash site, Handfield said.

A neighbor told police Spiezio arrived at their condo complex appearing disheveled and apparently injured. The neighbor said Spiezio allegedly assaulted him, causing significant injuries, Handfield said.

Mozeliak said that he and La Russa met with Spiezio and his agent before spring training started to discuss the accident. The GM said team officials did not know until Wednesday that alcohol was allegedly involved.

"We were led to believe that there was a chance that some of this was not going to gravitate to the level that it did today," Mozeliak said. "Obviously what came to light today changed how we looked at it. We decided we had to react."

Spiezio was devastated by the death of Cardinals pitcher Josh Hancock, who was legally intoxicated when he crashed into the back of a flatbed truck last April.

Spiezio said the situation might have pushed him deeper into dependency.

"You've got to put yourself in the right situations, sometimes change friends or go out to breakfast with a friend and not to a place where you can start making bad decisions," he said in January. "I've got to be in a frame of mind where I can't lose focus in any way."

SMC ad pullout hurts PBA All-Stars

MANILA, Philippines—The first real casualty in San Miguel Corp.'s pullout of advertisements in the Philippine Basketball Association will be the All-Star Week scheduled next month. Meanwhile, the league's marketing department is now in scramble mode to find a new major presenter.

Purefoods was supposed to be the major sponsor of the week-long extravaganza, scheduled in Bacolod from April 24. But Starcom, SMC's marketing arm, pulled out all television and in-venue advertisements in the PBA reportedly over the "James Yap issue."

Meanwhile, the Commissioner's Office, reacting to a *Philippine Daily Inquirer* report Thursday, said that technical chief Perry Martinez has not resigned and is "simply on an emergency sick leave."

But a source very close to Martinez said on Thursday that the technical chief went on a leave of absence and would be "kicked downstairs" when he returns to the Commissioner's Office after the Finals on Sunday.

Martinez, who had a shouting match with Sta. Lucia Realty team manager Buddy Encarnado on the eve of Game 4, will be transferred to the Operations Department when his leave ends.

Martinez had refused to endorse the suspension of Yap.

An unimpeachable source told the *Inquirer* on Wednesday that Martinez had informed league commissioner Sonny Barrios that Yap's infraction was "not upgradable, only fineable" because of a rule drafted by ex-commissioner Noli Eala.

Barrios reportedly sought reference to a rule penned by the late Mariano Yenko in the 1980s in levying a suspension on Yap for Game 5, which the Tender Juicy Giants lost.

Martinez, according to the source, told Barrios that since the foul in question was a judgment call, the league could not impose a suspension on Yap.

Meanwhile, Purefoods governor Rene Pardo spoke during the PBA board meeting Thursday and told Barrios to eliminate "all the gray areas" in the application of the rules.

Pardo, who was asked by the board to reconsider his resignation as chair of the body's ethics committee, said the board asked Barrios to draft a proposal so that "not all controversies are decided by him."

"There should be a clear-cut line on what he can and cannot decide on," said Pardo, who declared his resignation as irrevocable.

Pardo also denied that the pullout was in retaliation for the league's decision to suspend Yap.

The All-Star Game was supposed to get about P3 million to P4 million from the processed food giant in exchange for its major sponsorship. ***(PDI)***

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	44	12	.786	_
Toronto	32	24	.571	12
New Jersey	26	32	.448	19
Philadelphia	26	32	.448	19
New York	18	39	.316	26 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	37	23	.617	_
Washington	27	30	.474	8 1/2
Atlanta	23	32	.418	11 1/2
Charlotte	19	38	.333	16 1/2
Miami	10	45	.182	24 1/2

Central Division

Detroit	42	16	.724	_
Cleveland	32	26	.552	10
Chicago	23	34	.404	18 1/2
Indiana	22	36	.379	20
Milwaukee	22	36	.379	20

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	39	17	.696	_
New Orleans	38	18	.679	1
Dallas	38	20	.655	2
Houston	37	20	.649	2 1/2
Memphis	14	43	.246	25 1/2

Northwest Division

Utah	37	21	.638	_
Denver	34	23	.596	2 1/2
Portland	30	28	.517	7
Seattle	15	42	.263	21 1/2
Minnesota	12	44	.214	24

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	41	17	.707	_
Phoenix	39	19	.672	2
Golden State	34	22	.607	6
Sacramento	26	31	.456	14 1/2
L.A. Clippers	19	36	.345	20 1/2

Yesterday's Games

New Jersey 120, Milwaukee 106
San Antonio 97, Dallas 94
L.A. Lakers 106, Miami 88

HONDA CLASSIC SCORES

FIRST ROUND

Luke Donald	33-31	64
Brian Davis	33-32	65
Matt Jones	32-34	66
Kevin Sutherland	36-31	67
Ernie Els	34-33	67
Tim Wilkinson	34-33	67
Brett Quigley	34-33	67
Jimmy Walker	36-31	67
Jesper Parnevik	34-34	68
Dudley Hart	34-34	68
John Mallinger	34-34	68
Paul Goydos	33-35	68
Jerry Kelly	33-35	68
Roland Thatcher	33-35	68
Jose Coceres	35-33	68
Joe Durant	35-33	68
Tim Herron	33-36	69
Ben Crane	34-35	69
J.J. Henry	33-36	69
Eric Axley	34-35	69
Alex Cejka	33-36	69
Tag Ridings	35-34	69
Y.E. Yang	32-37	69
Steve Marino	35-34	69
Bart Bryant	34-35	69
Justin Leonard	33-36	69
Will MacKenzie	34-35	69
Arron Oberholser	34-35	69
Robert Allenby	36-33	69
Martin Laird	35-34	69
Kenneth Ferrie	35-34	69
Mark Calcavecchia	33-37	70
Jeff Maggert	34-36	70
Woody Austin	34-36	70
Davis Love III	33-37	70
Cliff Kresge	34-36	70
Michael Letzig	35-35	70
Briny Baird	34-36	70
Vaughn Taylor	34-36	70
Boo Weekley	35-35	70
Chad Campbell	33-37	70
Patrick Sheehan	33-37	70
Shane Bertsch	35-35	70
Marc Turnesa	36-34	70
Michael Allen	33-38	71
Robert Gamez	38-33	71
Robert Garrigus	36-35	71
Mathew Goggin	33-38	71
Nicholas Thompson	34-37	71
Chris Stroud	37-34	71
Peter Lonard	34-37	71
Sean O'Hair	35-36	71
Troy Matteson	35-36	71
Nathan Green	33-38	71
James Driscoll	36-35	71
Jason Day	36-35	71
Anthony Kim	35-37	72
Camilo Villegas	33-39	72
Charlie Wi	35-37	72
David Duval	34-38	72
Carlos Franco	36-36	72
John Riegger	36-36	72
Justin Bolli	35-37	72
Chad Collins	38-34	72
Alan Morin	33-39	72
Bill Haas	37-35	72
Richard Green	35-37	72
Frank Lickliter II	35-37	72
Duffy Waldorf	37-35	72
Fred Funk	34-38	72
George McNeill	35-37	72
Carl Pettersson	36-36	72
Richard S. Johnson	38-34	72
Charles Warren	31-41	72
Justin Rose	36-36	72
Stephen Leaney	36-36	72
Joey Sindelar	37-35	72
John Merrick	35-37	72
Brett Rumford	37-35	72
Henrik Bjornstad	36-36	72
Scott Sterling	36-36	72
Rich Beem	35-38	73
Jay Williamson	37-36	73
Ben Curtis	36-37	73
Sergio Garcia	38-35	73
Shigeki Maruyama	36-37	73
Glen Day	33-40	73
Kevin Streelman	39-34	73
Matt Kuchar	34-39	73
Heath Slocum	36-37	73
Todd Hamilton	35-38	73
Mark Wilson	38-35	73
Mike Weir	37-36	73
Kenny Perry	38-35	73
Retief Goosen	35-38	73
Rocco Mediate	36-37	73
Jason Gore	36-37	73
Nick Flanagan	38-35	73
Jin Park	35-38	73
Jon Mills	33-40	73
J.P. Hayes	36-38	74
Shaun Micheel	37-37	74
Zach Johnson	35-39	74
Jim McGovern	35-39	74
Richard Johnson	37-37	74
Garrett Osborn	36-38	74
Johnson Wagner	38-36	74
Craig Barlow	36-38	74
David Lutterus	36-38	74
Alejandro Canizares	39-35	74
Brandt Jobe	37-38	75
J.L. Lewis	35-40	75
Lucas Glover	35-40	75
Olin Browne	39-36	75
Chris DiMarco	34-41	75
Scott Hoch	36-39	75
Kyle Thompson	35-40	75
Dustin Johnson	38-37	75
Mathias Gronberg	40-35	75
Brian Bateman	36-39	75
Ken Duke	39-36	75
Cody Freeman	38-37	75
Pete Jordan	37-38	75
Chez Reavie	40-35	75
Trevor Immelman	38-38	76
Steve Flesch	40-36	76
Tim Petrovic	36-40	76
Angel Cabrera	35-41	76
Jonathan Byrd	36-40	76
Kevin Na	40-36	76
Tom Pernice, Jr.	39-37	76
Brad Adamonis	35-41	76
Tommy Gainey	37-40	77
Bob Estes	40-37	77
David Toms	37-40	77
John Senden	39-38	77
Ryan Armour	35-42	77
Jeff Overton	38-39	77
Tadd Fujikawa	42-36	78
Billy Mayfair	37-41	78
Billy Andrade	35-44	79
Joe Ogilvie	36-44	80
Kevin Stadler	40-41	81

By The Associated Press

WOLF

From Page 28

dog and didn't finish.

Just last week, Heather Kennedy and Kieran Daly of the local triathlon community were bitten by dogs while training in China Town and Upper Agigi Road, respectively.

Wolf outlined three reasons why pet owners should keep their dogs tied up during races, namely safety, aesthetics, and liability.

"The first is safety. A bicycle traveling at 25mph and hitting a dog can cause injury to the dog, injury to the biker, and damage to a sometimes very expensive bike," he said.

In referring to aesthetics, Wolf posed the question: Do we really want world class athletes coming to our island and seeing packs of wild dogs running around loose?

And last but not the least liability. "If someone should get hurt because of a bite or running into a loose dog, the owner may be liable for an injuries sustained by the athlete. Although the law is not strictly enforced, there is a leash law on the books," according to the DFS Boutique and Luxury Worlds associate store manager.

As far as the numbers for the twin events are concerned, Mojica said as of the morning of Feb. 27, 2008, 55 individuals have registered for the Tagaman Triathlon, including five teams that consist of a total of 12 people.

For XTERRA, a total of 48 have already been confirmed, with a record-high 24 coming from Japan.

"Because there are so few participants, and only a few pros, the race is fairly open to amateurs to place rather high," said Wolf.

Tagaman defending champion Andrew Noble of Australia and XTERRA Saipan defending champion Renato Bucher have confirmed their participation in the race.

The 6th XTERRA Saipan Championship, known as the "crown jewel" of the XTERRA Tour, is a unique challenge that kicks off on March 8.

The race starts with a 1.5-kilometer swim in the warm and clear waters off Micro Beach. The swim is followed by a 30-km mountain bike ride that winds through the island terrain and to the top of Mount Tapochao—towering 1,545 feet above sea level and is the highest point on the island.

The off-road triathlon concludes with a 12-km trail run that takes athletes through secret jungles and caves.

The entry fees for the XTERRA Saipan Championship is $125 for an individual or $250 for a team plus a $9 one day USA Triathlon license if you are not a member.

For XTERRA Sport, the entry fee is $75 for an individual and $150 for a team plus the $9 fee, if applicable.

The divisions that can be participate in are 15-19, 20-24, 25-29. 30-34, 35-39, 40-45, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-and-over (women), 60-64 (men), 65-and-over (men), professional, military, and challenged athlete. Teams may be men, women, co-ed, military, and challenged athlete.

The 19th Tagaman Triathlon, meanwhile, will be held a week later on March 15. It is the longest running race in the Western Pacific and draws its name and inspiration from the Taga stone—a unique archeological remnant of the original island people of Saipan.

The course begins at Pacific Islands Club and moves to one of the world's most beautiful bike courses. Cyclists will cover the entire island from north to south and will take in stunning views of Suicide Cliff and Bird Island. Upon returning to Micro Beach, the racers enjoy a flat run course along the western lagoon and through historic American Memorial Park.

Cash prizes are given for both XTERRA Saipan and Tagaman winners. XTERRA Saipan carries a top cash prize of $2,200 and Tagaman carries a top cash prize of $1,200.

This year's sponsors include DFS Galleria, Coca-Cola, Pacific Islands Club, and Northwest Airlines.

Entry forms for XTERRA Saipan and Tagaman can be obtained from the MVA website: www.mymarianas.com . Those interested can also visit www.tagaman.com or www.xterrajapan.net for more information.

CLEARLY

From Page 28

medals and nine world championships in the process. In a 10-year stretch, Karelin didn't give up a single point. Opponents would let themselves be pinned for fear Karelin might literally break their necks.

Okay, nothing in golf inspires that kind of physical fear, but the most appropriate comparisons might be in wrestling and boxing.

Excuse me, but Roger Federer's recent stretch of dominance, impressive by any historical standard for tennis, doesn't come close to Tiger's. Winning a tennis tournament requires beating six opponents, not the field. Tiger doesn't ever have the luxury of having another opponent take out, say, Mickelson and Sergio Garcia. It's up to Tiger alone. And while Jimmie Johnson's back-to-back NASCAR championships are no doubt impressive, there's no drafting in golf as there is in stock car racing, no teamwork that could result in the kind of "Push From Heaven" that determined the outcome of the Daytona 500.

Golf, as different as it is than boxing, is entirely self-reliant. Michael Jordan, great as he was, still had Scottie Pippen. Jordan hit plenty of game-winning shots but there were times he passed to teammates, notably John Paxson and Steve Kerr, to win games with final shots. Tiger doesn't get to toss the putter to an open teammate on the 18th green at Augusta National.

If anybody stands up to comparison with Tiger it's probably the greatest of the great prize fighters. Rocky Marciano, heavyweight champion from 1952 to '56, won every one of his 49 fights. Sugar Ray Robinson scored 91 consecutive victories from 1943 to 1951, including five over Jake La Motta, and 19 in one year, 1950. And most impressive to me is Joe Louis defending his heavyweight title 25 consecutive times over 12 years, from 1937 to 1949. He knocked out 23 opponents in 27 title fights, and did so at a time when the biggest and best athletes in the United States opted to fight, not play tight end or power forward.

Muhammad Ali's stretch of sheer genius in the ring was a lot shorter, from 1964 when he defeated Sonny Liston until 1967 when his boxing was suspended for refusing to be drafted into the U.S. Army. Still, there is a bit of Ali in Tiger when he leaves the U.S. to play in Dubai or Japan because Ali, if anything, was a traveling champion, likely to pop up anywhere from Zaire to Manila to fight. While boxing is the most exacting, most brutal game of them all and golf is almost never physically punishing, at least Ali didn't have to fight Joe Frazier and George Foreman at the same time. Golf is the game where you have to beat every single competitor, at the same time, all by yourself. And it's not just the best in the United States playing the big tournaments, it's the best in the world.

It's the one thing that might just give Tiger an edge in such a discussion over any great baseball or basketball player. Tiger doesn't have Lou Gehrig cleaning up behind him as Babe Ruth did. There's no question but that Ruth was the most important athlete in America the first half of the 20th century (Jackie Robinson only played in the major leagues the last three years of the first half of the century) and Jordan was the most popular, most celebrated, most decorated athlete in the world the second half of the 20th century. He won at every level possible: one college championship, six professional championships, two Olympic gold medals.

But you can make the argument that Bill Russell, with his 2 NCAA championships, 11 NBA championship rings and 1 Olympic gold medal, was a greater basketball player than Jordan. You can make an argument for Magic Johnson, who reached the NBA Finals nine times, three more than Jordan. You can make the argument that Willie Mays was as great a player as Ruth, or perhaps that Henry Aaron stands shoulder to shoulder with the Babe.

But we're very quickly coming to the point, with Tiger Woods (63) having surpassed Arnold Palmer (62) on the list of all-time PGA Tour victories and pulling up on Ben Hogan (64), Nicklaus (73) and Snead (82), that Woods will have reached an objective number that trumps any and everybody who ever held a golf club. Passing Nicklaus and Snead would make Tiger No. 1 in his sport, which the others can't indisputably claim.

When somebody asked Woods on Sunday afternoon if it's possible he can keep winning every time he competes, he said: "That's my intent. That's why you play. If you don't believe you can win an event, don't show up."

It's not what Tiger's competitors want to hear, but it's exactly what could make watching Tiger between now and the end of August a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

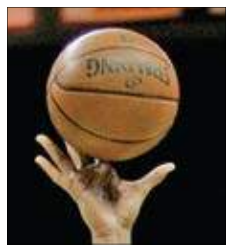
FBI opens investigation of Roger Clemens

The FBI took up the Roger Clemens case Thursday, told by the Justice Department to investigate whether the star pitcher lied when he testified to Congress he never took performance-enhancing drugs. **26**

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Duncan has 31 points in Spurs' win

Tim Duncan had 31 points and 15 rebounds and the San Antonio Spurs beat the Dallas Mavericks 97-94 on Thursday night for their seventh straight win. **24**



Home sweet home for Sakovich

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Wilhem "Bill" Sakovich found himself back on Saipan Thursday, but unlike the past, where he only had to deal with the Tagaman Triathlon, the 2004 NMASA Hall of Fame inductee will also taking on the mantle of XTERRA Saipan Championship course director this year.

"I'm always happy to be back home. This is a good excuse to come back. I enjoy coming back and I will be here for both events. XTERRA Saipan is an altogether different animal but it's basically the same as Tagaman. I don't see any problems serving as course director of the two events this year," he said in an interview with the *Saipan Tribune*.

Sakovich attended Thursday's final meeting for the 2008 Saipan Sportsfest and exchanged pleasantries with longtime friends and fellow volunteers from nonprofit group Taga Inc., led by its president Wolf Mojica.

The Saipan Swim Club co-founder and former director of the Division of Sports and Recreation flew in from Hawaii along with XTERRA Global Tour managing director Dave "Big Kahuna" Nicholas and support services manager Tyson Pualoa.

Sakovich, along with fellow NMASA Hall-of-Famer and SSC co-founder Jean, has made Hawaii a retirement home since moving there in the middle of 2004.

Asked how he feels about this year's Saipan Sportsfest, Sakovich said it's understandable that the number of participants is down, since this year marks the first time XTERRA Saipan is being organized locally.

"The numbers are down although that does not include the relays. It's not bad and usually there's a lot of last-minute entries, anyway, locally. I expect at least 150 total for both events, at least, when this thing is through," he said. "It's OK. As you know we're doing both events this year so we don't have the network that we had for XTERRA before. But I think we will have pretty good triathletes coming back."

He may not control the drop in participants this year, but Sakovich can still do something about people volunteering in the 2008 Saipan Sportsfest.

"One of the things we're still looking for are volunteers—people that we would need in key positions for both events. Because in the past, a lot of that was covered through the Team Unlimited people and now that's on our hands."

The Sakoviches arrived in the CNMI in 1974 and a year later established the Saipan Swim Club.

The two coached the NMI national swimming team to a total of 22 medals in the South Pacific Games since 1987. Their record in the Micronesian Games is more outstanding, as their swimmers brought home a remarkable 154 medals since 1990.

The two have also been familiar fixtures in organizing on-island sports events, always getting their hands wet in such annual events like the Tagaman Triathlon, Saipan Ocean Swim, and countless other endeavors.

The Sakoviches also helped create NMASA in 1978 and were also instrumental in reviving the Micronesian Games in 1990.

MARK RABAGO

Tagaman and XTERRA Saipan Championship course director Bill Sakovich, fourth from left, poses with other members of the 2008 Saipan Sportsfest organizing committee led by Taga Inc. president Wolf Mojica, sixth from left. Also in photo are XTERRA Global Tour managing director Dave "Big Kahuna" Nicholas and support services manager Tyson Pualoa.

Wolf wants dogs leashed for Saipan Sportsfest

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Taga Inc. president Wolf Mojica appealed to dog owners, especially those who live along or in the immediate vicinity of the courses for this year's 6th Annual XTERRA Saipan Championship and 19th Annual Tagaman Triathlon to please leash their pets during race days.

"Although I know of only two incidents where athletes were actually injured by running into dogs during the last few years of the Saipan Sportsfest, there are numerous instances where a charging dog has caused a biker to fall of their bike getting road rash," said Mojica in an email to the *Saipan Tribune*.

The most infamous incident involving dogs occurred in the 2004 edition of the Tagaman when 2003 XTERRA Saipan Championship winner Jason Chalker crashed his bike a mere five kilometers into the bike split after he tried avoiding a

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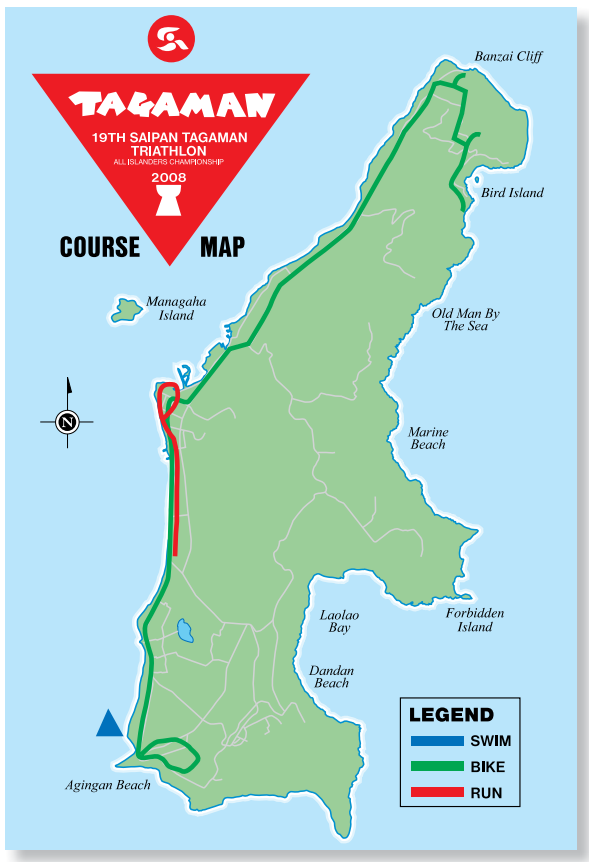

By MICHAEL WILBON
The Washington Post

Clearly, Woods stands alone

We're about at the point with Tiger Woods when it's pointless to limit the conversation about his competitive brilliance to the game of golf. With only Jack Nicklaus in that discussion we have to search for a larger context to put Woods's still ascending career into proper perspective. Winning the Match Play Championship over the weekend was another emphatic reminder that we're about at the point where Tiger's peers aren't Phil Mickelson and Ernie Els as much as they are Michael Jordan, Joe Louis and Babe Ruth.

In his last nine worldwide events, Tiger Woods has won eight times. The one tournament he didn't win, the Deutsche Bank, he tied for second. The Match Play had the strongest possible field, the top 64 players in the world rankings. Yet, his overwhelmed opponent in the final match, Stewart Cink, told reporters afterward: "I spent this whole week demoralizing my opponents because I was playing really well and they just didn't have a chance. And (Sunday) I was the one who was demoralized because I didn't have a chance."

Woods, certainly not given to the egomaniacal self-congratulation of so many of this generation's team sports athletes, nonetheless said of this latest run of success, "I think this certainly is the best stretch I've ever played."

It's a staggering thing to hear from a man who already has won 13 major championships, yet just turned 32 years old. He is just now entering the physical prime of a career that could easily last another 10 years. Mickelson, the game's second-best player, didn't win his first major until he was 33. The only numbers left to chase in the world of golf are Nicklaus' total of 18 professional majors and Sam Snead's all-time mark of 82 tournament victories, both of which Woods could overtake in three years. The Nicklaus mark could fall sooner than that if Woods does what has previously been unthinkable and wins the Grand Slam—say, this spring and summer.

In the meantime, while we watch and savor, it would be a waste of time to confine the comparisons to golf. Tiger has not only raised expectations to the point where it's surprising when he doesn't win, but also to the point where it's fair to wonder just how high he can go.

Can he have a summer that forces legitimate comparisons to Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak in 1941? Edwin Moses won so many hurdles finals, 122 in a row over 10 years, it led some hurdlers to simply quit. The Russian wrestler Alexander Karelin went undefeated from 1987 to 2000, taking three Olympic gold

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